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FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSICAL ART

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VOLUME SIXTEEN

FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSICAL ART

IN TWENTY VOLUMES

TITLES OF VOLUMES

- I. INTRODUCTION TO MUSIC
- II. THE FOLK SONG AND DANCE
- III. THE ART SONG AND ITS COMPOSERS
- IV. THE GROWTH AND USE OF HARMONY
- V. THE ART OF LISTENING
- VI. CHORAL MUSIC AND THE ORATORIO
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FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSICAL ART

EDWARD DICKINSON, Litt.D., *Editor-in-Chief*

VOLUME

SIXTEEN

MODERN FRENCH AND ITALIAN OPERA

By

FULLERTON WALDO



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The colophon of the Caxton Institute used on our cover and title page represents *Yggdrasil*, which according to Norse mythology is a mighty ash tree supporting the whole universe. It symbolizes Existence, and is the Tree of Life, Knowledge and Fate.

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MODERN FRENCH AND ITALIAN OPERA

I

MODERN ITALIAN OPERA

CONVENTIONS OF EARLY ITALIAN OPERA

EARLY Italian opera, we have seen, was bound hard-and-fast by conventions to which the composers steadfastly adhered. The rules recognized certain kinds of arias to be delivered by specified voices in fixed places; and the public was resentful if there was any flagrant variation from the pattern. According to the red tape that enmeshed *bel canto* in the eighteenth century, the chief singer must have his or her conspicuous opportunity at a definite time in the evening, so that those who came late and left early would not be disappointed. Vocalization held first place in the scheme of the composer and the audience for which he wrote; intellectual force and the display of natural instinct or emotion has been subservient to the pyrotechnic display. Arias

MODERN ITALIAN OPERA

might be cantabile, to show the quality of the tone, or portamento, to reveal the capacity for sustaining a phrase, or "di mezzo caraterre," of a nature intermediate between the two kinds just mentioned, or parlante,—that is to say, declamatory,—or bravura, frankly revealing the artifice and the technique of vocal production.

This differentiation concerned itself purely with the mechanics of singing, and was silent as to those qualities of personality and temperament which are actually of the utmost importance in giving to singer and song the emotional appeal which establishes the difference between a true artist and a soulless, heartless showman. In a truly great singer, we take for granted the supple, facile, disciplined apparatus, and we look beyond this for an interpretation of life, a reading of character. This the scores of the earlier Italian operas were not expected to supply or to encourage. They were written to show off the voices. It took a master like Gluck to give to the *dramatis personæ* the semblance and demeanor of human beings, instead of the stilted posturing and gesturing of puppets.

The tradition that decried intellectual power and exalted the display of vocal artifice carried over into the nineteenth century, and has survived even in the works of such delightful and

EARLY ITALIAN CONVENTIONS

diverting masters of opera as Rossini (almost as French as he was Italian), Donizetti, Bellini, and Verdi (in his earlier period). In listening to this music it is the beguiling melody that captivates our ears; the singer is on the stage not to create a personality but to warble lusciously. When in the twentieth century we find a Titta Ruffo making *Rigoletto* as human as Edwin Booth made Shylock, we feel that the character is lifted above the conventional significance of the rôle in the minds of most of its nineteenth century interpreters, if not of Verdi himself. "*Rigoletto*," however, as we shall see, belongs to the period in which Verdi was beginning to emancipate himself from the tradition that denied to the personnel of the opera human attributes not directly connected with the production of sound.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century came a golden age of Italian opera by no means disconnected from the emphasis of form over feeling, of sound over sentiment. Yet it was a period that has given us works of such ingratiating tunefulness, such grace of form, such sprightly merriment and happy fancy, that the world has not permitted them to die.

Easily the chief figures of the period in question are the four who have just been named. Let us deal first with Rossini.

MODERN ITALIAN OPERA

THE INNOVATIONS OF ROSSINI

Gioachino Rossini was born at Pesaro in 1792 and died near Paris in 1868. His best opera buffa was "*The Barber of Seville*," which is the work that chiefly keeps his name alive to-day as a composer of opera. "*Semiramide*" (1823) shows Mozart's influence. "*Moses in Egypt*" resembles an oratorio. After Rossini became director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris he brought out "*William Tell*," based on Schiller's drama. Though this opera appeared in 1829, Rossini remained amazingly silent, as far as operatic composition was concerned, for the rest of his days.

Rossini made his start on a very small equipment of musical grammar—a mere smattering of counterpoint. Yet because of his exuberant fancy and a knack of writing with spirit and freshness, his lively operas displaced the stilted prolixities of Cimarosa, Paisiello, and the academic school they represented. He dispensed with the long-continued "recitativo secco," which gave one voice the interminable right of way with a harpsichord in the wings for its sole support. He built up an underpinning of orchestration which, though it may not always seem full-blooded to-day, was robust and strenuous compared with the meager

THE INNOVATIONS OF ROSSINI

accompaniments his forerunners supplied. He did not, however, achieve either the character-drawing or the dramatic conviction which marks the finest operas.

"*The Barber of Seville*," written in twenty-six days and appearing in 1815, was a failure at the première. Nothing daunted, Rossini revised the music, and almost immediately converted defeat into victory. The opera is of infectious and irresistible rhythmic gayety, its brisk motion prohibitive of serious thought, its first and last design to provoke laughter and to please the ear. The rapid-fire sequence of humorous episodes, set to measures of real inspiration, has a charm as potent for the sophisticated modern audience as for the hearers of a century ago.

Let us examine this charming work more closely.

Its characters are partly those of Mozart's "*Marriage of Figaro*." The libretto, adapted by Sterbini from the comedy of Beaumarchais, takes up the story at an earlier point, so that it forms, as it were, an introduction to Mozart's beautiful work. The scene is laid in Seville, where we find Count Almaviva in love with Rosina, ward of Doctor Bartolo. Bartolo himself has designs upon the young heiress, and is not minded to make it easy for an-

MODERN ITALIAN OPERA

other to woo and win her. Basilio the music-master helps him to place obstacles in the way of a suitor.

Almaviva appeals to Figaro, the barber, who knows all and helps (or hinders) everybody—he is the factotum of the lively, gossiping, intriguing city. Figaro becomes the *deus ex machina* to bring the Count and the young heiress together. The lady is already in love with her handsome cavalier, whom she knows merely as Lindoro the student, since Almaviva wishes his rank to have no part in winning her favor.

At Figaro's suggestion, Count Almaviva gains an entrance into Bartolo's house in the guise of a drunken soldier who is to be quartered there. Bartolo, in a huff, forbids him to remain, and goes off to look for his householder's writ of exemption from such undesirable guests. The lovers in his absence improve their opportunity for an enamored tête-à-tête. But when Bartolo returns he brings with him the guards, who arrest the importunate wooer.

In Act II we have a delightful scene in which the Count impersonates the music-master, pretending that old Basilio is sick and has sent this young preceptor as his substitute. In the presence of the duenna, Berta, the Count makes

THE INNOVATIONS OF ROSSINI

love to Rosina during the bogus lesson. Basilio, the real music-master, enters and the ruse is exposed. Bartolo is white with anger, and the Count hastily departs, whispering to his innamorata a plan for eloping the next evening. Bartolo produces a letter, purporting to be that of Lindoro the student, in which the latter says that with the aid of Figaro he means to give her over to Count Almaviva. Upon learning of this perfidy, Rosina says she will see Lindoro no more, and will wed her guardian instead.

Bartolo, overjoyed, summons a notary; but Rosina, on second thought, decides to keep her appointment with Lindoro and hear what he may have to say. When the supposed student comes with Figaro, Rosina learns to her inexpressible delight that he is the Count. When the notary appears, they bribe him to perform the marriage. Bartolo arrives too late, but is mollified when the happy pair turn over to him Rosina's fortune, which they will not need.

The score to which the words are set ripples, bubbles, and effervesces in keeping with the swift, electric touch-and-go and merry by-play of the comedy. Not for a moment does the music mean to do more than charm and entertain. Nowhere could it be mistaken for anything but the lilting and frisking measures of a capital *opéra buffa*; and its famous "*Largo al*

MODERN ITALIAN OPERA

factotum," in which Figaro describes how variously and constantly busy he is kept, is a supreme example of the buffo aria. In such an air the bass voice—which had little of moment to do in the opera seria—was made of great importance, being assigned long passages of rapid-fire "patter." "Everybody wants me!" cries the Barber. "Figaro, Figaro, Figaro! For heaven's sake, one at a time. I'll stand this clamor no longer. Figaro here, Figaro there, Figaro high, Figaro low. I am the factotum of the town (*factotum della citta*)."

The most ingratiating melody in the opera is the serenade (*cavatina*), "*Ecce ridente in cielo*" (Lo! smiling in the sky), the Count's serenade to Rosina after the opening chorus of Act I. At the first performance January 20, 1816, the famous tenor Garcia who had the rôle of the Count used a Spanish air of his own which was coolly received. Rossini, who had dashed off the entire opera in three weeks as fast as Sterbini fed him the libretto, wrote the *cavatina* before the second performance, using a melody he had employed in two previous works of his own, "*Aureliano*" and "*Ciro in Babilonio*" (Cyrus in Babylon).

It begins in largo time and concludes with a brilliant, elaborate allegro. The "*Largo al factotum*" comes in the second scene of Act I.

THE INNOVATIONS OF ROSSINI

In this act also occurs Rosina's celebrated aria "*Una voce poco fa*" (One voice does little), which is a taxing revelation of the diva who essays it, with its wide compass and its florid intricacy. Violins prettily introduce it; flutes and clarinets announce the theme in Mozartean fashion. Soon afterwards Basilio delivers the bass solo "*La Calunnia*," generally known as the "*Calumny aria*." Here the orchestra toward the end quotes a theme from Mozart's "*Nozze di Figaro*"—Basilio's aria, "*La Vendetta*."

In Act II, the music-lesson scene permits Rosina to interpolate any song she pleases, since the trio Rossini wrote for this episode was lost. If there is an encore—as is usually the case—tradition has the prima donna play her own accompaniment for the second air. In this act there is a song by the duenna, Berta, which used to be called the "*Aria di sorbetto*" (aria of the sherbet) because the audience ate ices while it was being sung. The theme was taken from a Russian dance that was popular in Rome in 1816. The motive of a trio that occurs shortly thereafter was calmly purloined from an air in Haydn's "*Seasons*."

In the season of 1923–24 the Metropolitan Opera Company successfully revived "*William Tell*," whose overture has maintained its hold

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on popular favor all these years, when heard at band-concerts. Leopold Stokowski put this overture on his program with the Philadelphia Orchestra in October, 1922, and vigorously defended it against the charge that it was no better than band-music and did not deserve its place. Casella, the extreme Italian modernist, has gone out of his way to praise Rossini's "*William Tell*" extravagantly. He has written an essay entitled "Some Reasons Why a Futurist May Admire Rossini." Every one of his operas, he avers, bears the stamp of genius. He praises Rossini's imagination, his vivacity, his flair for rhythm, his ingenious harmony, his orchestration—singularly bold for his epoch—and his never-failing fount of melody. These qualities all come to the fore in the overture, which in the Metropolitan production was advanced to the beginning of the second act, that the beguiling sounds might not be lost in the shuffle of late arrivals.

Why was Rossini's pen inactive, after it dashed off "*William Tell*"? He was thirty-seven when he wrote the work; and he was in excellent health and spirits. He was seventy-six when he died—and during the thirty-nine years he wrote no more operas, though he produced the "*Stabat Mater*" and the "*Messe Solennelle*."

THE INNOVATIONS OF ROSSINI

After the triumph of "*William Tell*" Rossini had entered into an arrangement with the French Government to write only for the French stage, during a period of a decade, producing an opera every second year for the sum of 15,000 francs apiece. "*William Tell*" was to be the first of five operas. Then the Government changed hands, and the incoming administration canceled the agreement. In any event, Rossini may have felt that after achieving success with "*William Tell*," he did not care to make the effort to meet the competition of Spontini and Meyerbeer in their pretentious grandiloquence which had captured popular taste. But he continued for some years to labor for the upbuilding of bel canto at the Liceo in Bologna, with a conscientious devotion to the advancement of the pupils, one of whom was the famous Marietta Alboni. In the last years of his life, Rossini amused himself writing trivial piano pieces and performing on the piano.

Though he willfully broke his own career in half, Rossini in the first part of his life set down to the credit side of the account a notable achievement for Italian opera. A great borrower and adapter of the best effects of others, "what he thought he might require he went and took," as Kipling's poem puts it. But in

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the pilfering he improved the material beyond recognition.

His innovations destroyed the bald monotony of the old-time "secco" recitative. Lover of vivid and poignant effect, warmth, the glow of passion, and the profusion of tone-color, he built up climaxes that (to the judicious) often became distressingly noisy, while they appealed to gallery-gods who favored melodrama. The horns and clarinets in the finale of "*Semiramide*" delighted his hearers. Like Weber, he was fond of the horns, and he uses them conspicuously in "*William Tell*." The latter opera gains in grace and delicacy by the composer's study and imitation of French models. There is in this work a synthetic power of design, a breadth of style, a unity of concept, a consideration for the practical requirements of the stage which show the care expended by the composer on the masterpiece and justify the acclaim it has received.

It is indeed remarkable that Rossini, creator of a masterpiece of opera buffa in the "*Barber of Seville*," should have produced in the field of opera seria so important and impressive a work as "*William Tell*." It is the work that eventually, not immediately, made Rossini's name and fame in France. It belongs to the French school of historic opera or melodrama,

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a hybrid form in which the musical intent is hampered by being over-freighted with its narrative content. Making a deliberate concession to French preferences in its musical idiom, "*William Tell*" still remains Italian in its lyric character. Rossini transmits to his successors the heritage he received from the Neapolitan school and its chief figure, Alessandro Scarlatti.

It is notable that, with all his adherence to the antique prescription, Rossini in his "*Otello*" ignored the "recitativo secco" of the voice supported by a single instrument, and employed throughout the "recitativo stromentato," of the voice underpinned by orchestra. An excellent horn-player, he made telling use of the horns and brasses to enhance a dramatic effect, and the enriched orchestration appears to great advantage in his non-operatic works such as the "*Stabat Mater*." He wrote his own cadenzas and ornamental artifice for the singers, instead of permitting them a liberty which too often became outrageous license. The *cabaletta*, a swift, spirited air to form a long-drawn cantabile, was Rossini's innovation. But the virtual abolition of the "recitativo secco" was a reform more important than all the rest of the improvements due to the versatile composer.

Rossini died in Paris Nov. 13, 1868, and

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Patti and Alboni sang the "*Quis est homo*" from the "*Stabat Mater*" at the funeral service, which was one of the most imposing ever held for a musician. Contrast it with the hasty and unmarked interment of Mozart!

Rossini represented the climax of the Italian school of bel canto in the tradition of the eighteenth century—the tradition that set the heroic tenor or the capricious prima donna on a lofty pedestal, that catered to the appetite of the gallery with a luscious profusion of ear-tickling melody, that had no mission save to amuse and to please. This tradition was to give way in time to the power of dramatic truth, the suitable marriage of text and music, the intrinsic significance of theme, and the incisive delineation of character that we find in the best of the music-dramas of the nineteenth century. Rossini frankly wrote for his audience, and professed no higher aim than entertainment. The public of his day acclaimed him; to-day but two of his many operas keep his memory green in this particular field, and of "*William Tell*" one seldom hears any portion save the overture.

Yet Rossini's services, with all due allowance for the clap-trap and the theatricality, were of no mean order. He was a genius in the sphere of opera buffa: while humor holds the stage

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his "*Barber*" will not be superseded. He made the orchestra more important than ever before, giving the instruments congenial employment with the art of one who was himself a virtuoso. He destroyed the last vestige of favor for the old-time type of sterile and arid dry recitative, and ended the vogue of the male soprano. The bass voice was given its own métier of virile assertiveness, but Rossini stood out firmly against the outrageous abuse of the poetic license which moved the singers to follow their own sweet will instead of the notes put down for them to sing.

In these and in other ways, while it is true that he catered to popular fancy, he raised the whole level of operatic composition and production and his influence persisted with lesser men who recognized in him a master in their art, and an authority unquestionable. If, then, his operas were scintillating rather than substantial, inclined to the rococo and the baroque of sensational melodrama rather than to the inner light or the deeper level of emotional sincerity, they served a purpose of transition and of preparation for greater things to come which earn for their author the gratitude of succeeding generations.

Especially should we remember that in these operas, as in the preceding operas of Mozart

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and the succeeding works of Donizetti and Bellini, a galaxy of great singers have won imperishable renown and given delight to innumerable auditors who tenderly remembered them, and who found in them their standard of comparison. Marcella Sembrich, Enrico Caruso, Adelina Patti, Nellie Melba,—the catalogue of lustrous names in a golden age is too long for repetition here. It runs back to such sopranos as Jenny Lind, Grisi, Malibran, Sontag, or such contraltos as Alboni and Scalchi; to such tenors as Mario, who "could soothe with a tenor note the souls in Purgatory," Tamagno, Italo Campanini; such basses as Lablache, that wonderful Leporello, who had a compass of two octaves, and who gave singing-lessons to Queen Victoria.

DONIZETTI AND BELLINI

Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848) was at first a competitor and imitator of Rossini. His name is usually paired with that of Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835), whose creative activity was a spur to Donizetti's independence and initiative. Donizetti and Bellini take rank below Rossini, as the best of a large number who "played the sedulous ape" to him. When Bellini died, at the age of thirty-four, Donizetti

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was alone in the field against Rossini's waxing popularity.

Donizetti wrote sixty-five operas, while Bellini produced but ten. Donizetti's first work to attract notice was "*Enrico di Borgogna*," in 1818. By 1830 he had written thirty-one works, which bear the impress of Rossini's manner and method. With "*Anna Bolena*," in 1830, began a period in which he ceased to be the slavish copyist, and developed an idiom of his own. In the field of comedy his chief successes are "*L'Elisir d'Amore*" (1832), "*La Fille du Régiment*" (1840), "*Don Pasquale*" (1843). In the serious vein his capital achievements include "*Lucrezia Borgia*" (1833), "*Lucia di Lammermoor*" (1835), "*La Favorita*" (1840), "*Linda di Chamounix*" (1842). Oscar Hammerstein's revival of "*Lucia*," with Luisa Tetrazzini warbling the coloratura of the name part, gave such popularity to the Sextet that it was heard inevitably and interminably on every street-piano, and became a part of all motion picture repertoires. The fact that Caruso found congenial opportunities in "*L'Elisir d'Amore*" meant the successful revival of that rather thin and threadbare work by the Metropolitan Opera Company.

Donizetti in his characteristic vein was fluent and florid, vivacious and humorous. It was his

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misfortune that he wrote so easily. He turned out the fourth act of "*La Favorita*" in four hours. He had a keen, sure instinct for the dramatic accent, and the pulse-beat of superficial passion. There is a plenitude of melody, and he writes with his dear friend the Public constantly in view. He was not interested in a theory of art: he wanted to put into the mouths of singers those gracious, sparkling passages which would at once win public favor. In this he was eminently successful. Echoing the comic genius of Cimarosa and Paisiello, his happiest effects are those of a light and sparkling effervescence, of sprightly vivacity, of tuneful and irreflective mirth-making. Like his colleagues, Donizetti never threw off the shackles of servitude to the singer rather than to the cause of music.

The direct relation between Donizetti and the singers of his day is illustrated in the creation of the operetta "*Il Campanello di Notte*" in 1836. A Neapolitan manager needed a work to save himself and his little company from stark ruin. "If you would only give us something new our fortunes would be made!" said a pretty little prima donna wistfully. Like the dramatist Sheridan, Donizetti would produce at high speed under pressure. He promised the distressed singers an opera within a week.

DONIZETTI AND BELLINI

But he had no libretto. He racked his own brains to supply one. A vaudeville playlet he had seen in Paris was his inspiration. Deliberately pilfering the idea, in nine days he had done the libretto, the music was composed, the parts had been learned, and the performance lifted the delighted opera company out of the slough of despond.

The "*Daughter of the Regiment*" has enlisted some of the most famous sopranos—among them Jenny Lind, Sontag, Patti, Albani, Tetrazzini, Frieda Hempel. "*Don Pasquale*"—delightful comedy, with tunes that lilt and burble like spring birds—was written for a famous quartet, Grisi, Mario, Tamburini, and Lablache.

During his last years Donizetti became increasingly moody and abstracted. He had an attack of paralysis in 1845, and his death occurred three years later at his birthplace, Bergamo. In April, 1924, Donizetti's one-act opera "*Rita*," composed for Paris in 1860, had its first Italian hearing at Bergamo.

Vincenzo Bellini was born in 1801 at Catania, Sicily's capital. His father, an organist, was his first teacher. He never had to be urged to practice: from his youth, it was hard to persuade him to leave his beloved piano. If he had not worked so incessantly, his life might

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have been longer. What is usually considered his masterpiece, "*La Sonnambula*," was presented at La Scala in 1831, and met with instant favor when it was given in England.

This opera is the summation of all of Bellini's best qualities. It has the easy, graceful lyric vein, it abounds in tunes to be sung and whistled by the populace; without any rugged forcefulness of dramatic contrivance anywhere, it always aims to please and is melodiously ingratiating. Its emotional appeal is direct and simple, and the weariest of tired business men can take in the whole import of the music as readily as if he were listening to any reigning success of musical comedy.

"*Norma*" is another Bellini opera that is occasionally revived. Based on a classic legend, with a Druid priestess for its heroine and a Roman officer for the hero, it gave Bellini the opportunity to write in an idiom of simplicity, dignity, and even majesty, befitting the argument. He could not, however, desert the ornamental and the decorative style which the taste of the day demanded and which was congenial to his peculiar talent. Accordingly we find, amid the serious and noble episodes (such as the famous air "*Casta diva*") a good deal that is comparatively trivial.

"*I Puritani*," with a poor libretto of Civil

DONIZETTI AND BELLINI

War England, is as easy to hear as "*Norma*" or "*La Sonnambula*" on the rare occasions when it is revived. But it is one of the operas which must lean heavily on the art of the stage-manager to be made palatable to a generation which is not satisfied with a succession of arias and ensembles in default of a close-knit, well-wrought story of dramatic pith and import. An opera is not a concert in costume, and the modern audience insists that the *dramatis personæ* shall act as well as sing.

"*Norma*" added to the fame of several celebrated prima donnas. Both "*Sonnambula*" and "*Norma*" were written expressly to display the vocal gifts of Giuditta Pasta (1798–1865). Pasta was capable of singing flat for an entire evening, and still was to be rated among the ablest singers of her time. Another fine "*Norma*" was Giulia Grisi (1811–1869). Rossini and Bellini amiably vied with each other to write for her voice and to procure her presence in their casts.

In the long list of those who won distinction in the rôle were Thérèse Tietjens (1831–1877) and Lilli Lehmann (born 1848). It was especially difficult for Tietjens to sing music that required such quick turns and changes as are found in the scores of Rossini and Bellini, and it is to her credit that by diligent applica-

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tion she learned to utter the dizzy coloratura effects with such apparent nonchalance and ease. Tietjens worked as hard, it is said, as any singer known to the operatic stage, and always did her best to keep faith with an audience.

It is pleasant to record the encouragement Rossini extended to Bellini. When the author of "*Norma*" died, the elder Bellini wrote to Rossini: "I shall never cease to remember how much you did for my son. I shall make known everywhere, in the midst of my tears, what an affectionate heart belongs to the great Rossini."

After Rossini, there are few examples of opera buffa that can lay claim to salient distinction. But the brothers Ricci (Luigi, 1805–1859, and Federico, 1809–1877) produced a delightful little work, "*Crispino e la Comare*," (The Cobbler and the Fairy), popularized in America by Hammerstein with Luisa Tetrazzini in the leading rôle. It is a fairy-tale and farce in one, diverting to children of all ages, building its whimsical libretto upon the amazing adventure of a shoemaker, poor and desperate, to whom a fairy gives a purse of gold as he is about to drown himself. Then he embarks on a career as doctor under her auspices, but success turns his head and he

THE OPERAS OF VERDI

thinks he can afford to ignore her injunctions. In the dim light of a subterranean cavern she gives him in an alarming vision to behold the lamp of his own life expiring; to his great relief he is restored from the underworld to his home, and with the solemn profession of his abject penitence the opera comes to an end. The music is of the liveliest and the loveliest: the little opera was a great favorite of Madame Tetrazzini, whose enjoyment in her rôle was evident to her audience.

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After the school of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini, with their imitators, comes the outstanding name of Giuseppe Verdi, who was born at Roncole in 1813, and died in 1901 at Milan. There is no rival near his throne in the domain of Italian opera. Moreover, he is one of the musicians whose lives are an open book without the disfigurement of moral lapses. He was above petty vanity; he endured misfortune with unfaltering courage; and if ever a man's demeanor alike in the hour of trial and under the sun of prosperity earned a happy fate and the praise of men, Verdi deserved felicity in his lifetime and an honorable fame.

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Verdi's father kept a small inn and a little tobacco-shop. One of the few amusements cheap enough for the baby Giuseppe was to run and dance in the wake of the village organ-grinder. He did not care for the vigorous pastimes of the other children. When he was seven years old his family dared a great extravagance, and bought him a spinet. The child, in transports of delight, teased the crude instrument through all sorts of consonances and dissonances. One day by chance he hit upon a combination of notes that gave him keen pleasure, but next day the "lost chord" obstinately refused to come back. So he took a hammer and began to punish the offending spinet. The elder Verdi rushed into the room and boxed his son's ears. A good-hearted neighbor repaired the damage, and would charge nothing, writing on one of the jacks that he did the work gratis because of the "good disposition of the boy Giuseppe Verdi for learning the instrument."

At church, where the lad at the same age was assisting the priest, he was so entranced by the tones of the organ that when the priest called for water he paid no heed to the demand. After a third request had fallen on deaf ears, the priest kicked the poor boy so violently that Giuseppe fell down the altar steps. They car-

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ried him, unconscious, into the sacristy, and his father promised him, by way of compensation, that he might take lessons from the organist who produced such spellbinding harmonies. It was worth the bruises. But at the end of a year, this teacher declared that he had communicated all he knew.

Nevertheless, on the surprising ground of want of aptitude for music, Verdi was refused a scholarship at the Milan Conservatory. When the church folk of his home town, Busseto, ratified the Conservatory verdict, and refused to name him cathedral organist as well as leader of the local orchestra, a small civil war broke out between the partisans and the foes of the young man. At twenty-three he married. Within two months of 1840, by a crowning stroke of misfortune, he lost both of his children and his wife.

At the time he had contracted to write a comic opera. He wrote it—“*Un Giorno di Regno*”—and it fell flat. Verdi, utterly disheartened, resolved to write no more. He was induced to change his mind, and “*Nabuco*” was fairly successful. Then came “*I Lombardi*,” which might be construed as a declaration of independence on the part of young Italian patriots. The Archbishop of Milan complained to the chief of police that the libretto was “pro-

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fane" and "irreverent." Verdi took a firm stand. He said, "My opera shall be given in its present form or not at all." The chief of police yielded. "*I Lombardi*" was acclaimed by the public, and is still given in Italy.

Verdi's own temperament was political (in the best sense) and patriotic. He did not intend to keep his own passionate convictions regarding personal liberty, and freedom of thought and speech, out of the scores he penned. Italy in the forties was mutinous and murmurous with protest against Austrian rule in the peninsula, and any writer or composer who encouraged the protest could be sure of a hearing and a following. Verdi's music whetted the ardor for revolt; it was often allied to words that were covertly if not openly a call to arms. An air like "*O mia Patria, si bella e perduta*," in Verdi's "*Nabucodonosor*," was received by the populace as "the voice of one for millions, in whom the millions rejoice for giving their one spirit voice." No wonder that Verdi was elected to Parliament in 1860 and became a senator in 1875. To many he personified the struggle of the new Italy toward unity and independence, the overthrow of the hated alien domination. Inevitably his operas often encountered the remonstrance of officialdom amid the popular acclaim.

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"*Ernani*," produced in 1844 for the Fenice Theatre at Venice, crowded the house, and in nine months it was produced on fifteen stages. Other operas, several of which were censored by the police as treasonable, led to a good deal of whooping and stamping in the gallery because of inflammatory patriotic assertions, but their life was ephemeral and their fame transient.

"*Rigoletto*," "*Il Trovatore*," and "*La Traviata*" belong to the middle period of assured technique and established authority. There was another battle with the police over the libretto of the first, because of the unflattering portraiture of royalty. But the chief of police, like the one who passed "*I Lombardi*," was a lover of musical art. Obliging he pointed out that the King could be changed into a Duke of Mantua, whose doings made no difference; and so the opera was saved for a spectacular triumph of huzzas and plaudits, and for perennial favor beyond the immediate success.

"*Il Trovatore*" (first given at Rome in 1853) had the same good fortune, but at the première "*La Traviata*" (brought out at Venice six weeks later) singularly failed. Verdi wrote to a friend next day: "*Traviata* last night made a fiasco. Is the fault mine or the actors'? Time will show."

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The trouble was with the cast. Graziani, the tenor, had a cold and was barely audible. Varesi, the baritone, did not care to be relegated to a secondary rôle, and he sulked or was indifferent. Madame Donatelli, the heroine, was phenomenally stout, and when the doctor in the third act told the audience that she was dying of consumption, it howled in glee. But the work immediately took a firm hold on popular favor elsewhere. When it was given in Paris, in 1864, the role of Violetta was assumed by Christine Nilsson, making her first appearance.

In 1855 "*The Sicilian Vespers*" was produced in Paris. The Paris public was indulgent: it ignored the fact that the story described a massacre of the French by the Sicilians, and bestowed cordial approval on the work. Again there was trouble with the Austrian rule in Italy: the police would not allow a libretto to deal with revolt against oppressors. So the score was fitted with another poem, and the opera sallied forth in altered guise under the name of "*Giovanna di Guzman*." "*Simone Boccanegra*," despite a powerful prologue and an excellent last act, went to smash because of its poor libretto and the inferior interpretation; but after Arrigo Boito changed the text and the composer revised the music the opera

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was brought forward again in Milan, on March 24, 1881, and was well received.

"*Un Ballo in Maschera*," however, precipitated a political storm beside which the previous controversies were mere zephyrs. While it was in rehearsal, the Italian revolutionist Orsini (on January 13, 1858) tried to kill Napoleon III in Paris. The opera's name at the time was "*Gustavo III*," and because of the title and the revolutionary content of the text, the performance was interdicted. The police said Verdi must find new words. He refused, and the management of the San Carlo at Naples sued the composer for damages in the amount of 200,000 francs. The city was turbulent when it learned of the controversy. Crowds, singing and cheering, marched after the composer through the streets in hero-worship, shouting, "Vivi Verdi!" The word "Verdi," it was understood, was composed of the first letters of the Italian king's title: "Vittorio Emmanuele, Re d'Italia."

The Roman impresario Iasovacci leaped into the breach, placated the police, and brought out the opera in Rome (February 17, 1859) with "*Richard, Governor of Boston*" in place of "*Gustavo III*." The name was changed to "*Un Ballo in Maschera*." Thus we have the anomaly of an Italian opera presented in

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Rome, staging a brilliant court ball in a palace in Puritan New England, by aristocrats scintillating with jewels, their purple and fine linen replacing sober homespun.

St. Petersburg first gave ear to the flowing harmonies and absurdly fantastic legend of "*La Forza del Destino*" (1862). "*Don Carlos*" roused the Paris Opera in 1867. Marking the beginning of the final and culminant epoch of Verdi's creative endeavor stands "*Aïda*," produced at Cairo December 24, 1871, to glorify Egyptian majesty. It was composed by order of the Khedive of Egypt and was produced on the sovereign's birthday anniversary.

"*Aïda*" marks the beginning of a new period, in which the influence of Wagner is apparent. But here was no slavish, sycophantic imitation, for Verdi never hesitated to look about him as he went forward and to adapt to his own uses the best devices he discovered anywhere. Thus for their exemplary melodic dignity and simplicity he looked to Palestrina and other early Italian music makers. While he toiled at the score of "*Aïda*" he had his table covered with the noble creations of Bach. While he studied his forerunners Scarlatti, Rossini, Bellini, or Mozart, he knew what his contemporaries Berlioz and Meyerbeer demanded of singers

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and instruments, and strove to imitate their virtues and avoid their faults.

Wagnerian technique set him an impressive pattern. He saw how bold and free was the thematic development of the German composer, how brave the Bayreuth master was in his chromatic sequences and developments. The texture of Wagner's score by contrast with the pale insipidity of some early Italians was rich and various as an Oriental carpet, and the *dramatis personæ* had salient individuality. Wagner's leading motives were finger-posts to characters, and not merely to peripatetic emotions. At no point does Verdi sound the depths that Wagner reached, in making his music a reading of life in its mysterious complexity, its mazes of feeling and impulse dimly foreshadowed, yet subtly implied.

But comparison with the works of his own earliest period shows a Verdi who is thinking and feeling his way to the supreme achievements of "*Otello*" and "*Falstaff*," frequently assigned to a distinct fourth period of development—a division that recognizes not merely the intellectual evolution of the composer but the lapse of sixteen years between "*Aïda*" and "*Otello*."

It is usual to divide Verdi's output into three periods—the first signalized by "*I Lombardi*"

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(1843) and "*Ernani*" (1844), to mention but two of many; the second memorable for "*Rigoletto*" (1851), "*Il Trovatore*" (1853), "*La Traviata*" (1853); "*Un Ballo in Maschera*" (1859), "*La Forza del Destino*" (1862), "*Don Carlos*" (1867); the third distinguished by "*Aida*" (1871), "*Otello*" (1887), "*Falstaff*" (1893). It will be seen that the last work was completed when Verdi was nearly eighty; yet it betrayed no waning of original force and creative power. Verdi's progress from strength to strength is one of the most impressive exhibits of maintained intellectual development that the history of music has to show.

In the first of the three periods we find an echo of the eighteenth century Neapolitan opera. But Verdi's obedience to the Italian tradition even in this period is marked by a greater intensity of passion and a more forceful character than we find in the scores of Bellini and Donizetti, with whose works Verdi's earliest productions have often been compared. The qualities they have in common include an easy, fluent melodicism in a continuous sequence of arias, with a slight connective tissue of conventional recitative.

In the second period we find much more assertive instrumentation, and climaxes of dy-

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namic ardor and fervor offset by effects that are sometimes perilously close to sheer clap-trap and noisy banality. But with the third period, in the full maturity of the composer's genius, we find him freed from the cheap *ad captandum* devices of mere sound and fury, which have been replaced by the rounded development of the meritorious qualities of which in the earliest works we had seen the intermittent and prophetic flashes. He grew in grace, in knowledge, in intellectual stature, through the superb achievement of "*Aïda*" to his amazing swan-songs of comedy and tragedy that electrified the world.

These latest works are cast in a Wagnerian mold, and they likewise embody principles recognized and adopted by the twentieth century French composers. For they are primarily concerned with representing inmost sentiment and essential motive, not their outward aspects merely; they make the music breathe the spirit of the lines in a blended unison of musical score and dramatic narrative; they are not bent on glorifying the singer, nor on supplying for the physical senses merely a dazzling avalanche of sound and color to the footlights. They have symmetry of proportion, unity of design, continuity of movement, and richness of harmony and orchestration. They do not minister to

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the long and firmly established appetite for the "set piece" that the eighteenth century audience demanded. But these clearly discernible resemblances to Wagner and the later Frenchmen are not the outgrowth of an intent to imitate. They represent the inevitable evolutionary stages in Verdi's own self-reliant, vigorously original, independent development during which, as we have seen, he neglected no man and no model that could teach him anything.

"*Otello*," in four acts, with libretto by Arrigo Boito, was brought forward at La Scala in February, 1887, Franco Faccio conducting, with Tamagno and Maurel in the chief rôles. Verdi named it a lyric drama. But straightforward lyricism in this opera stands in second place to the dramatic scheme that lays stress on crucial situations and the development of character. The violent storm with which the opera begins foreshadows Othello's own mental processes, which supply the central motivation of the work until the catastrophe of the last act. The only resemblances to arias of the accepted pattern are Desdemona's "*Ave Maria*" and "*Willow*" song,—and these are introduced as incidental lyrics would be in a spoken drama. The action is rapid, and rich and elaborate as is the orchestral substructure, it is never allowed

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to impede the movement or embarrass the surcharged and poignant dialogue.

"*Falstaff*," also with a libretto by Boito, reveals Verdi's genius for comedy—as sure of its medium and its method as the composer's tragic instinct, disclosed in "*Otello*." "*Falstaff*" was produced six years after "*Otello*," and Maurel created the title rôle, while Mascheroni conducted.

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The salient feature of "*Falstaff*" is the epic characterization of the fat knight, through episodes of delightful foolery. "*Falstaff*," despite its unflagging vitality and infectious humor, has not achieved the hold on popular favor it seems to deserve. Musicians have admired it, though singers have not found in the score the congenial opportunities for personal display that Verdi's earlier operas abundantly present. Audiences inured to the more deliberate unfolding of a story, with an opulence of easy tunefulness, may take exception to its relatively brief scenes with their moments of slap-stick boisterousness. But it is hard to remain indifferent to the cumulative power of the ensembles, and the sustained inspiration of the final fugue. Though the work has not yet come into its own, it cannot be ignored, and it will receive from posterity the respectful consideration denied to many a work of noisy

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pretense and shallow artifice which for the present crowds it off the scene.

"*Aïda*" is the favorite Verdi opera. It has all the elements of spectacle, sound, and incessant action that make for popularity. It is said to be the prime favorite of impresarios as the curtain-raiser for an operatic season. Moreover, it has made or enhanced many a reputation. To name but a few contemporary artists, Caruso and Martinelli have distinguished themselves as Rhadames; Gadski, Rosa Ponselle, Claudia Muzio, Frances Peralta, Emmy Destinn, Barbara Kemp, Marie Rapold, and many others have been noteworthy Aïdas. De Luca and Bohnen have figured as Amonasro; Amneris has engaged the talents of Marie Brema, Schumann-Heink, Matzenauer, Homer, Jeanne Gordon and other eminent contraltos.

"*Aïda*" was composed in 1871, by order of the Khedive of Egypt, and the first performance took place in December of that year as the culminant feature of His Majesty's birthday celebration, in the presence of the Empress Eugénie of France. It made a profound impression on that first occasion, and it has never lost its hold upon the affections of the public.

In brief, the story is this. The princess Aïda, daughter of Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, is

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taken prisoner by the Egyptians and becomes the slave of the princess Amneris. Amneris and Aïda are both in love with Rhadames, great captain of the Egyptian host. Rhadames returns the love of the slave girl and is indifferent to the charms of her mistress. Amneris thenceforward is consumed by the desire for vengeance. When Rhadames returns triumphant from the wars, in his train of prisoners is Amonasro, Aïda's father. The latter compels Aïda to extract from Rhadames the secret of the route which the Egyptian army is to follow on its next campaign in Ethiopia.

While Aïda with her blandishments obtains the story and wins the support of Rhadames for her father's cause, Amonasro listens in hiding. Then Amonasro, exultant, makes his escape, and Rhadames who has been overheard by Amneris and Ramfis, the high priest, must forfeit his own life for his recreancy. Amneris offers to procure a pardon for Rhadames if he will accept her love. But life to him is valueless without Aïda, and he declines the offer. He is condemned by the priests in solemn session to be buried alive. Aïda finds her way into the vault wherein he is immured, and they expire in each other's arms to the chant of the priestesses and the lamentation of Amneris.

Here is indeed a story which, in its essential

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simplicity, combines all the attributes which a composer longs to find in a libretto. It places in sharp antithesis elemental feelings whose implications and percussions supply an abundance of telling crises and powerful climaxes. The genius of Verdi, in all the unprecedented opulence of his orchestration, never allows the attention of his hearers to be distracted for a moment from the dramatic transaction on the stage to the beauty of the music which subtly and unconsciously enforces the psychology of the situation, mirrors what is passing through the minds of the protagonists, and creates at all times a background and an atmosphere against which the vivid realism of the drama flames like torches in the night. This opera, it is conceded, calls for singing and acting of the highest order, and in the performance ruthlessly exposes any vocal, instrumental, or scenic inadequacy. But no other work gives an able stage-manager better chances to display his skill in constructing a *mise-en-scène* of sumptuous pageantry and Oriental splendors.

The most celebrated air of all in this opera is sung almost at the start by Rhadames. It is the luscious "*Céleste Aïda*" (Heavenly Aïda). It is an exacting test of the heroic tenor, with its pianissimo B flat at the close, often delivered fortissimo for the gallery's

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dear sake. (And the boxes seem to like it just as much as the gallery!) By the success of this air the ability of the singer is likely to be gauged for the whole of his impersonation, so that he is on his mettle to deliver it as well as he can, and is greatly relieved when the subsequent applause is so loud and long as to warrant an encore.

Other popular numbers are Aïda's "*Ritorna vincitor*" (Return a Conqueror), her romanza "*O Patria mia*," the duets of Aïda and Rhadames in Acts III and IV, the love-plaint and the lamentation of Ameris. But in cumulative effect of scene and sound the supreme event is the triumphal entrance of Rhadames at the Theban gate, with the procession of captives, and tutelary divinities, and the pealing sonority of antiphonal groups of trumpeters upon the stage while the coryphées are dancing and strewing a floral roadway for the high-borne throne of the conqueror. It would seem that the conspiring synthesis of all that appeals to the musical ear and to the latent paganism of our senses could no farther go!

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Linked with Verdi's name and fame because he prepared the librettos of "*Otello*"

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and "*Falstaff*," and gave him wise counsel, is Arrigo Boito, born at Padua in 1842, dying at Milan in 1918. Boito deserves consideration not merely as contributing to the reputation of another man, but as the author of "*Mefistofele*" and "*Nerone*." As Verdi was refused admission to the Milan Conservatory, so Boito was almost dismissed therefrom, on the ground of slight aptitude for music. But his composition professor, Alberto Mazzucato, stood by him; he graduated with an excellent operetta to his credit, and the flattering attention of scholars for his literary attainment.

Then he embarked upon a career of deliberate production, severe self-scrutiny, and almost morbid introspection which refined the quality and reduced the quantity of his compositions, while those who realized his gifts were urging him to the disclosure. Boito was a man of letters rather than a musician, his temperament that of the fastidious amateur and dilettante.

In 1868 at La Scala he produced his famous opera "*Mefistofele*," for which, in meditation of the "Faust" legend, he had concocted a few scenes six years before. It was brought forward too soon. In this original form, the opera was long-drawn; the première consumed six hours. Though the theatre (La Scala)

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was besieged on this occasion, and the first act stirred the audience to a frenzy, the parody of church worship by the devils turned popular favor into scandalized hissing and cat-calls before the evening was over. After several performances the opera was withdrawn by the chief of police—a reminder of Verdi's frequent experience.

Boito revised the opera, and tried again in 1875, at Bologna. The part of Faust, this time, was assigned to a tenor instead of a baritone, greatly to the advantage of the ensemble, and the unholy revelry of Mefistofele's coronation was so tempered as to be inoffensive to churchmen. But the gains were offset by losses which have made competent authorities wish that the original score might appear just as it was written, without concession to public sentiment. Of late years the popular favor accorded to "*Mefistofele*," which on the whole is greatly inferior to Gounod's "*Faust*," is largely due to the compelling enactment of the name-part by Feodor Chaliapin. When Chaliapin is not on the stage, and the scene is less spectacular, the music seems to have long stretches of respectable dullness, and to be wanting in orchestral subtlety, dramatic accent, and melodic inspiration.

Boito's opera, "*Nerone*," has beaten all

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records for prolonged preparation. The composer began to consider his subject as early as 1862, and the work was left unfinished when he died fifty-six years later. Had it not been for the devoted labor of Toscanini, the Italian conductor and Tomonasini, the Roman composer, the work would not yet have seen the light of day. Boito's music-less tragedy in five acts on the same theme came out in 1901, and met with a chorus of praise and blame commingled. The operatic version has but four acts—for the fifth, Boito left a single sketch. Toscanini and Tomonasini had a task of magnitude, for it was found necessary to revise the entire orchestration to make the work palatable for modern audiences. Their work was much like the recension which Rimsky-Korsakow carried out, whereby Moussorgsky's "*Boris Godounov*" was made acceptable.

"*Nerone*" had its world première at Milan, in La Scala, under Toscanini's baton, on the evening of May 1, 1924. It is not necessary to retell here the tale of Nero the emperor and his persecution of the Christians. There is a villain, Simon Mago, a magician; he is the arch-enemy of Fanuel, the Christian leader. Fanuel loves Rubria, the vestal virgin, and Asteria is enamored of Nero. The climax comes with the burning of Rome while Emperor and

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people at the arena are watching the Christian martyrdom. In the final scene—instead of the madness of Nero, which Boito intended as the culmination—we have the death of the vestal virgin, who embraced the religion of her lover but could not save his following, though the lover himself escapes.

The music is disappointing, since it is “neither melodious in an old-fashioned sense nor modern in harmony and workmanship.” But, as in the case of “*Mefistofele*,” the spectacle in the Milan production is magnificent, and the scenic investiture (largely wrought by Pogliaghi, designer of the bronze door of the Milan Cathedral) has elicited the admiring amazement of all beholders. It is the Neronian period come alive; the work is a glowing epic of the age that was its inspiration. Despite the musical inadequacy, the strength of the text and the skill of the presentation are such that Boito’s fame is assured, and will rest securely on the foundation of his two extraordinary operas.

“*Mefistofele*” when first performed had an inadequate cast; and not all of the *dramatis personæ* of “*Nerone*” were equally satisfactory. But a great personal triumph was scored by Rosa Raisa as Asteria, and by Marcel Journet as Simon Mago. Aureliano Pertile had the

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title rôle. Seats for the opening night commanded (among the speculators) prices ranging as high as \$300, and the box office receipts were about \$50,000.

MASCAGNI AND LEONCAVALLO

Pietro Mascagni (born 1863), like Ruggero Leoncavallo and Giacomo Puccini (in his earlier works only), belongs to the so-called "veristic school" of Italian opera, whose composers sought to electrify and horrify their audiences with violent event and tempestuous passion set to music of pungent flavor and stark, primary tone-colors. They aimed at the realism we find in the parallel schools of modern fiction and drama. Often (especially in the scores of Puccini) there are effects of poetic intensity and even of inspiration: sometimes the score descends to the level of mere sensuous sound and fury, appealing to a low order of taste and feeling.

A prize offered in 1890 by the publisher Sonzogno, in the effort to find a fresh voice in a new era, was taken by Mascagni's "*Cavalleria Rusticana*" on which its composer's fame has since depended, in spite of his almost frenzied efforts to repeat his capital success. "*Cavalleria Rusticana*" (Rustic Chivalry) is usually

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given in what has come to seem an indissoluble alliance with Leoncavallo's "*I Pagliacci*," though a good many opera patrons by this time would like them to be divorced, that the latter might be presented in conjunction with a merrier opera than either of the pair—let us say, Puccini's boisterously amusing "*Gianni Schicchi*."

Pietro Mascagni was born at Leghorn—the son of a baker who wanted him to study law, so that he was obliged to practice the piano surreptitiously as if he were doing something disgraceful. When he was fourteen the father discovered the infamy, and to remove the blot on the family escutcheon locked up his errant offspring. Then a kind uncle got him out of durance vile, and a generous patron, Count Florestan, gave him a chance to study—very restlessly—at Milan. After that, he "went on the road" with opera troupes, till with the tabloid tragedy of "*Cavalleria*" he leaped at a bound to fame.

In that short opera is one tune that ranks with the most popular in all operatic history: it is hardly necessary to say that this tune, with its persuasive, insistent repetition of its highest note, is the "*Intermezzo*." The "*Intermezzo*" is scarcely on a higher plane than Ethelbert Nevin's "*Rosary*" or Dvořák's "*Hu-*

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moresque" or Raff's "*Cavatina*," but like these noted airs it is an excellent example of the powerful appeal of simple melody to the average person. Mascagni is by no means in the first rank as a composer: yet "*Cavalleria*," hackneyed as it has become, is a work not wanting in inspiration. Its popular success is primarily due to the impact of melodramatic sensation and harrowing realism: it is the operatic counterpart of the "shilling shocker."

Italy went wild over it. Mascagni was hailed as another Verdi; medals were struck in the composer's honor; his native city of Leghorn gave him the welcome of a victorious general, with torchlights, flowers, and tumultuous acclaim. The King conferred on him the high honor of the Order of the Crown of Italy, which Verdi had not received until middle life—and Mascagni was but twenty-six.

But Mascagni was unable to repeat. His premature elevation to world-wide renown was too much for him. From that time forward, incurably eager to advertise himself rather than to produce a noble work of art deserving of immortality, he produced a succession of commonplace and insipid imitations of his masterpiece. "*L'Amico Fritz*," revived by the Metropolitan Company in 1923-24, was superficially pretty, and spiritually null and void.

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"*I Rantzau*" was pompous mediocrity, and "*Guglielmo Ratcliff*" was equally tedious. "*Silvano*," too, was a failure. "*Zanetto*," which signalized Mascagni's appointment as director of the Pessaro Conservatory, is orchestrated for strings and harp alone, and has a refinement of quality denied to the blatant run of Mascagni's creations.

Mascagni unhappily decided to tour America in 1903, disregarding the wishes of the management of the Conservatory when he extended his leave of absence; and they replaced him with a less temperamental and more amenable director. The tour was a failure.

"*Iris*," produced at Rome in 1898, was a little better than the other operas that had followed "*Cavalleria*." The Italian public has cordially received it; but it has not done well in other lands. With "*Le Maschere*" the extraordinary plan was followed of having the première in seven cities simultaneously. At Rome it was liked a little, and shortly consigned to oblivion. At Genoa the audience would not permit the performance to be finished. At Milan, Naples, Verona, Venice, and Turin it was vigorously hissed—with that ardent concentration of disfavor in which Italian audiences are conspicuously successful.

"*Lodoletta*" appeared in 1917, "*Si*" in 1919,

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and "*Il Piccolo Marat*" in 1921. Though "*Guglielmo Ratchiff*" and "*Iris*" are the only full-sized operas from Mascagni's pen, and his impatience for immediate notoriety instead of a durable renown has defeated his insatiable ambition, he should be given credit for amazing pertinacity and considerable industry. His career is a twentieth century recurrence of those repeated instances wherein Italian composers of the eighteenth century made the great mistake of sacrificing quality to quantity as soon as they met with popular favor, and so achieved a transitory success at the cost of enduring oblivion or at most a few half-hearted lines in the dictionaries of musical biography.

Ruggiero Leoncavallo, likewise a one-opera man, has had a fate similar to that of Mascagni. Born at Naples in 1858, a magistrate's son, he starved and despaired in youth, and was suddenly glorious with "*I Pagliacci*"—written for the same Sonzogno who two years earlier had published "*Cavalleria Rusticana*." "*I Pagliacci*" first saw the bright lights of Milan's Teatro dal Verme in May, 1892. The name of the composer was bruited throughout Italy. Not one of his other operas means more than a name to the present generation, with the sole exception of "*Zaza*"—and that

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musical melodrama was given a new, brief lease of life only because of Geraldine Farrar's audacious enactment of the brazen and unamiable heroine.

A sense of theatric effect, a mastery of polyphonic resource, an almost infallible grace and ease of orchestration few will deny to the author of "*I Pagliacci*." The Prologue sung by Tonio and the Lament of Canio (especially as Caruso declaimed it) are outstanding episodes in an opera which far surpasses the Mascagni work that so faithfully keeps company with it. Leoncavallo has written his own librettos, which are meritorious; and, taking a leaf from the book of the illustrious Boito, he supplied the book for several operas of his friends,—for example, the Portuguese composer, Augusto Machado, who wrote "*Mario Wetter*."

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By all odds the supremely popular Italian composer of our day is Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924). He continues the "line royal" from Monteverde through the sweet singers of the nineteenth century with Verdi heading the choir; he fulfills the authentic tradition of lyric instinct and dramatic feeling that charac-

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terizes the most successful previous achievement of Italian opera. No writer in the long catalogue has a surer instinct for the sustained and sweeping melodic curve, vividness of tone-color, poignant climax, fascinating sequence and resolution of chords, and the employment of subtle cadences—all these enhancing the significance and charm of the score and suiting action and the dialogue with sounds that reflect and project essential sentiment and the swift mutation of varying moods.

Verdi toward the close of his career prophesied that his own mantle would fall on Puccini, then hardly known outside of Italy.

Puccini was born at Lucca. Music with him was a hereditary instinct: his ancestry through many generations had been wedded to the art, and therefore—unlike so many of his predecessors—he had no parental opposition to encounter in his choice of a career. He began his studies at his birthplace, and continued them at Milan with Ponchielli, author of "*La Gioconda*." Later he returned to the Conservatory to give instruction in composition.

"*Le Villi*," a one-act opera produced in 1884, was his first. "*Edgar*," five years later, was another of the numerous instances of a respectable score hampered by a weak libretto. "*Manon Lescaut*," though still occasionally

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presented, has not the popular appeal of Massenet's handling of Prévost's story. But "*La Bohême*" was completely successful, and is preferred to all the rest of his operas by many of Puccini's admirers. The composer has penned few measures more beguiling than those of the love-duet of the first act, between Rudolph and Mimi in the moon-flooded garret of the Latin Quarter. It is a spontaneous outpouring of song that proceeds from a wellspring of inspiration pure and undefiled.

One need not look in Puccini's scores for the "might, majesty, dominion and power" of Beethoven, or Bach, or Brahms. He sounds no profound reaches beneath, and touches no supernal heights above the tides and gusts of human passions. But in the use of the terms of musical melodrama, in the persuasive exhibition of all the resources of bel canto, he has hardly a contemporary rival in his own land, of harmony in the blood, of sound inseparable from life.

"*Tosca*," with its brutally graphic realism, its salient personality of the somber and formidable "Scarpia" (so magnificently portrayed by Antonio Scotti), displays Puccini's dramatic genius convincingly. The title rôle is almost as much the ambition of the modern prima donna as Hamlet is among actors. Geral-

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dine Farrar was one of its conspicuous exponents, and Maria Jeritza made a sensation with her intense and forceful interpretation. In the latter singer's autobiography, "Sunlight and Song," is an interesting description of Puccini's enthusiastic approval for the startling innovation Jeritza offered when she sang the famous "*Vissi d'arte*" lying flat on the floor.

"*Madame Butterfly*" gave Geraldine Farrar her capital opportunity, and in musical history the opera and the diva will be inseparably associated. In Henry Finck's absorbing volume, "Success in Music and How It Is Won," is a sympathetic and extended description of Farrar's performance in this rôle and her attitude of mind toward it. The "*Flower Duet*" in this opera closely rivals in popularity the love-music of "*La Bohême*." Most singularly, when "*Madame Butterfly*" was first given at Milan it was hooted and hissed; and it was withdrawn after one performance. A few months later, revised and condensed, it was presented at Brescia, and was heartily applauded.

"*The Girl of the Golden West*," which has few stand-and-deliver arias of the conventional pattern, and much broken dialogue, did not take hold in America as did the other Puccini operas, but it abounds in delightful and in-

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genious instrumentation, the action is spirited and variously picturesque, and the opera deserved a better fate.

A "trittico," or trilogy, of one-act operas comprised "*Il Tabarro*" (The Cloak), a grisly tragedy; "*Suor Angelica*," a lachrymose and sentimental music-drama of a nun who has sinned and is penitent and pardoned; and "*Gianni Schicchi*," which is sprightly and delectable comedy, far exceeding in merit the other members of the trilogy.

In his earlier years Puccini was overshadowed by Mascagni and Leoncavallo; and W. F. Apthorp quotes an Italian musician as saying to him in this period: "It is a disgrace to our reputation abroad that immature and absolutely second-rate talents, like Mascagni and Leoncavallo, should be taken all over Europe as the foremost representatives of Italian music to-day, while solid musicians, like Puccini and one or two others, are utterly unknown outside of their native country."

Time is fast remedying that inequity.

Puccini's most recent opera, "*Turandot*," is based on a play by Gozzi, for which Busoni once wrote incidental music. The story is that of a Chinese princess who puts her numerous and clamorous suitors to the test like a Portia of Cathay. This opera was scheduled for first

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presentation by the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York during the 1924-25 season, but the production was postponed until 1926-27. Puccini is quoted by a friend as saying that he did not wish the première to take place in Milan, since it was in that city that his beloved "*Madame Butterfly*" was hissed.

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The activity of modern Italians in opera has rivaled the feverish productivity of the golden age of the Florentine Renaissance. Many composers of merit deserve honorable mention. High in the list of secondary figures stands Italo Montemezzi, whose chief title to enduring remembrance is "*L'Amore dei Tre Re*," with its exquisitely euphonious libretto molded by Sem Benelli. Serge Prokofieff, the Russian, has satirized the title in his "*The Love for Three Oranges*." Montemezzi, born at Verona in 1875, and trained at the Milan Conservatory, is hard at work on other productions.

Riccardo Zandonai, born in 1883, has somewhat altered Shakespeare in his "*Giuletta e Romeo*," with its ingenious reiterative effect and elaborate detail in the music, and his pretty "*Conchita*" (presented in America) and

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"*Francesca da Rimini*" have won him a following. He is now working on "*Gosta Berling*," whose story is taken from Selma Lagerlöf's novel. Lately he cut down to two acts his "*La Via della Fenestra*," originally produced in 1919, thereby giving it a new lease of life and of popular favor.

Riccardo Pick-Mangiagalli, an Italian-Bohemian born at Strakowitz in 1882, another Milan Conservatory pupil, is author of the lyric comedy "*Basi e Bote*" (1922)—a work for which Arrigo Boito provided the libretto.

Francesco Malipiero, unorthodox modernist, has put to music three one-act comedies by Goldoni: "*La Bottega da Caffè*," *Sior Todero Brontolon*," and "*Le Baruffe Chiozzote*" (for the last of which Leone Sinigaglia wrote a lively overture). Malipiero is a Venetian, born in the same year with Pick-Mangiagalli.

Franco Alfano's "*La Leggenda di Sacuntala*" (The Legend of Sakuntala) (1921), was scheduled for performance during the season of 1923-24 at the Colon in Buenos Aires, with Claudia Muzio in the leading feminine rôle. In the same repertoire was included Ildebrando Pizzetti's "*Debora e Jael*" (Deborah and Jael), with Flora Perini. Pizzetti is among the most important Italian

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writers of the day. He is deeply versed in the lore of Greek and Gregorian modes, and he does not follow the radicalism of the hour into fantastic excesses, as certain of his compatriots are fond of doing. He was born at Parma in 1880, and "*Debora*" appeared in 1922. Trained at Parma, Pizzetti in 1918 became director of the Conservatory at Florence. His "*Fedra*" (1915) was successfully revived at Naples in 1924.

Renzo Bianchi's "*La Ghibellina*" (The Ghibelline), with a libretto by Dario Niccodemi, was well received at the Costanzi, in Rome, in April, 1924.

Ottorino Respighi (Bologna, 1879), who edited Monteverde's "*Lamento d'Arianna*" (Lament of Arianna), and arrayed Bach and Vitali for the organ, is the author of several operas, of which "*Belfagor*" (1923) might be named. Alfredo Casella, leader of the Italian modernists, wrote the buoyant score of the "choreographic comedy" "*Il Convento Veneziano*" (The Venetian Convent). Casella was born in Turin, 1883, and studied with his mother and at the Paris Conservatory.

Alberto Franchetti (Turin, 1860) wrote "*Cristoforo Colombo*" in which Rosa Raisa and Titta Ruffo appeared in America, and "*Germania*," which supplied Caruso with a

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somewhat infelicitous rôle. Baron Franchetti has enjoyed the sometimes dubious advantage of wealth, which enabled him to develop his considerable technical skill free from the pressure of economic necessity. The strongest work of Umberto Giordano (Foggia, 1867) is "*Andrea Chenier*," but Jeritza in the title rôle of his "*Fedora*" gave the rather bombastic and melodramatic effects a new significance. Giordano is one of the "veristic" composers who seek to impart the thrill of emotional intensity by startling dynamic devices.

Alfredo Catalani's principal work is "*La Wally*" (1892), and Ponchielli—who preceded Catalani as professor at the Milan Conservatory—is best known for his powerful "*La Gioconda*." Ponchielli died in 1886. At one time he was a rival of Verdi in popular acceptance. Franco Vittadini (Pavia, 1884) is author of the admired "*Anima Allegra*" (1921).

Ermano Wolf-Ferrari (born at Venice, 1876), had an Italian mother, though of German paternity. Aside from his noble oratorio "*La vita nuova*," which dates from 1903, his best-known works are the charming "*Jewels of the Madonna*," with two intermezzi that always win loud and long applause, and the "*Secret of Suzanne*"—which requires but

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three characters, one of them a tongue-tied servitor who has nothing to sing. Wolf-Ferrari, for his refined and subtle craftsmanship, his inventive faculty and his authentic dramatic instinct, takes high rank among contemporary musicians. His works have been brought out in Germany because of difficulties with a monopolistic Italian publishing house.

In "*L'Oracolo*" (The Oracle), by Franco Leoni (born at Milan, 1864), the favorite baritone Antonio Scotti has achieved one of the capital successes of his long and brilliant career, in the central rôle of the Chinese villain, Chim-Fen. Francesco Maliepiero, who is mentioned before, has also written the more serious opera "*Canossa*." Crescenzo Buongiorno was, like Wolf-Ferrari, an opponent of the sometimes crude realism of the "verismo" school, which includes lesser figures such as Spinelli, Tasca, Corongro, Cilea, and Rossi. Buongiorno was born near Avellino in 1864, and died at Dresden in 1903. "*Etelka*," "*Das Mädchenherz*," and "*Michel Angelo and Rolla*" are among his best-remembered works; and he wrote a series of Italian operettas.

It will be seen that modern Italy is true to the tradition of the centuries, and that,—far in the lead of the neighboring Iberian and

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Balkan peninsulas in her creative musical genius,—she conserves the inheritance received from a primal age of great awakenings.

Such present-day Italian composers as Pizetti, Casella, Malipiero, and a few others who deserve honorable mention, are alive to the danger of leaving the development of music to the "veristic" composers of opera. They would hark back to the traditions which animated such a composer as Carissimi, and to patriarchal ideals of sincerity and consecration to the loftier aims of musical art, in place of a sensational and fleeting popularity. Their work breathes an exalted, other-worldly mysticism; it often crosses the confines of the familiar to the region of twilight and vague suggestion which is the congenial atmosphere of a kindred spirit, the French composer Debussy. We find them using melodic outlines of fragile delicacy, a range of timbres and tone-colors as various and as subtle as the mutations of Eleonora Duse's voice in a play of D'Annunzio. This is especially true of Malipiero, who projects in musical notation the changing moods of exquisite sensibilities, running the gamut from ecstasy to despair or at best a fatalistic acceptance of the human lot. It can be seen that composers adhering to such tenets would feel it a recreancy to their art if they

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gave ground to writers bound at any cost to "give the public what it wants," as the hue and cry of too many impresarios, managers, and publishers has been, both yesterday and to-day.

II

MODERN FRENCH OPERA

CHERUBINI AND MÉHUL

WE have elsewhere discussed important pioneers of the French school—Lully, Rameau, Gossac, and others. It remains to carry forward the story of the development of opera in France from the earlier creative epoch to our day.

Following Gluck, who died at Vienna in 1787, two influential, salient figures are Cherubini and Spontini. Cherubini emphasized a serious artistic purpose as the way of life for the beginner in music. He believed that rules should be learned ere they are broken. Commonly, in the long perspective of time that has robbed many a figure of its contemporary luster, Cherubini is regarded as pedantic and austere, a foe to enthusiasm and a discouragement to young talent and precocious innovation. But he was a great deal more than that: his service to musical art was real and lasting, and his name deserves to live, though most of his music is forgotten.

That name, in full, was of imposing length—Maria Luigi Carlo Zenobi Salvatore Cheru-

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bini. The son of a theatre musician, he was born at Florence, in 1760; but his musical life became so completely identified with Paris, where he died in 1842, that his biography belongs to the story of French rather than Italian music.

In a catalogue of his own compositions he tells us that he began to study "music" at six, and composition at nine. His first opera, "*Quinto Fabio*," was written when he was twenty. Before he was twenty-six, he had written eight operas and amended others, and as a result of his growing reputation he was invited to London, where the Prince of Wales befriended him and he was named Composer to the King—a post he held but a year. For like so many of his contemporaries, he heard the call of Paris, and that city in 1788 became his home. His operatic debut in Paris was made with "*Demophon*." The work is worthy of notice, because it marked a distinct advance in his method. Hitherto he had followed a sprightly, frivolous tradition of Naples,—the tradition that has given us the profusion of gay, bright street songs associated with the open-air life of the southern city. "*Demophon*," however, was written in the "grand style" of elevation and dignity which was later to become identified with Cherubini's name.

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Cherubini, whose operas enjoyed a considerable vogue in Paris, was regarded as the most scholarly French composer of his time. But though he stood high in the favor of opera-goers, he could not win the favor of Napoleon, who had no ear for anything but the easy fluency of the more frivolous sort of Italian opera.

The best qualities of Cherubini's chaste and dignified but somewhat dry and pedantic style come to the fore in his masses. The most celebrated of these beautifully wrought compositions are the masses in D minor, A and C. The requiems in C minor and D, as well as the unaccompanied credo for eight voices, enhanced his prestige as a church composer. In the list of his dramatic works, besides "*Demophon*," the chief examples are "*Lodoiska*," "*Medée*," "*Les deux Journées*," which was popular in England under the name "*The Water Carrier*," "*Anacreon*," and "*Kaniska*." His operatic overtures are still to be heard, not infrequently, in Germany and France.

When Cherubini went to Vienna in 1805, he met Beethoven, who conceived the liveliest admiration for him, and did not hesitate to declare him the foremost living opera composer. Cherubini, on the other hand, said of Beethoven's sole opera that no one could name the

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key in which the overture of "*Fidelio*" was written and that Beethoven had not sufficiently studied the art of writing for the voice. After Cherubini (in 1822) became the devotedly laborious director of the Paris Conservatory, Beethoven wrote to him asking for his powerful aid in obtaining a subscription from the French king for Beethoven's "*Mass in D.*" But Cherubini did not deign to reply.

Cherubini, faithful to the tradition of Gluck and the German composers (Haydn and Mozart in particular), laying stress on the portrayal of a character and not the display of vocal artifice, has his defined and paramount place in the number of those who laid the foundation for opéra-comique. The opéra-comique is musical comedy of dignity and refinement, and even the spoken dialogue which was once a salient point of distinction from serious opera may be reduced to a minimum or disappear altogether.

Fairly dividing the honors with Cherubini as a proponent of the opéra-comique, broadening and deepening its scope and nature, we find Etienne-Henri Méhul (1763-1817) a potent and a wholesome influence. Méhul, disciple of Gluck in his lofty idealism, carried out the precedent set by Duni, Philidor and Grétry, in deriving the subject matter from (more or

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less) contemporary life instead of from antique fable and Olympic legend, depicting characters in whom his audience could recognize the types they knew, whose whims and foibles were familiar. Thus he held a mirror up to nature rather than to an antiquated pattern; he drew as it were from living models rather than plaster casts. "*Joseph*," with its thoughtful and rounded portrayal of the patriarchal epic figure, is his masterpiece. It should be noted that he strove successfully for the authentic values of sentiment and of tone-color in his orchestration, and in his music we discern more than a premonition of the Romantic school in whose development Weber was presently to become so prominent a factor.

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Gasparo Spontini (1774–1851), like Méhul a devotee of Gluck, came from Italy to Paris in 1803, and wrote operas—however arid and stilted they may seem to-day—that in their time marked a noteworthy departure from the accepted order. For like the paintings at Versailles and Fontainebleau they glorified French imperialism, finding an abundance of material in the martial pomp and lavish display associated with the triumphs of Napoleon.

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Heroic themes, projected against the historic background, engaged Spontini's laureate pen, in conformity with the militaristic and grandiose taste of his day. He takes his place as a pioneer of the school of "historic opera," so called, in which Rossini with "*William Tell*," Auber with "*Masaniello*," whose original French title was "*La Muette de Portici*," Meyerbeer with "*Les Huguenots*" and "*Le Prophète*," and Wagner with "*Rienzi*" also figure.

Spontini was not consciously writing down to a low level, for his standards were exalted and he sought to elevate the opera as he found it. But his works seem to-day chiefly bombast, brazen resonance, and dazzling spectacle; they are wanting in pith and substance, and they no longer justify the elaborate mechanism that has to be set in motion to produce them. When Weber's "*Der Freischütz*" was given at Berlin in 1821, the public at once perceived the difference; and the vogue of Spontini was speedily eclipsed, as repeatedly we have seen a new and powerful influence in operatic history destroy the acceptance of less vertebrate forerunners.

Spontini had been appointed director of the Royal Opera in Berlin only the year before Weber's epochal work was given, so that the blow of fate seemed cruel. His last opera,

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"Agnes von Hohenstaufen," its subject taken from mediæval German life, was produced in 1827. It was severely criticized, and it remains in manuscript. Earlier works were *"La Vestale,"* of Roman inspiration, in 1807, *"Fernand Cortez,"* transporting the hearer to Spain and Mexico, in 1809, and *"Olympie,"* with a Greek background, in 1819.

Spontini, at odds with his singers but not with his orchestra, out of favor with the sovereign, dispossessed of his public, was driven from the opera house by cries of "Hinaus! hinaus!" ("Out! out!"), and threats of personal violence on April 2, 1841, at a performance of Mozart's *"Don Giovanni."* He had become involved in charges of profiting by the sale of tickets, and in defending himself to the sovereign he had tactlessly expressed himself in language that was made the basis of his conviction for lèse majesté and a sentence to nine months' imprisonment. The sentence was remitted, Spontini was given a sum of money, and after vainly asking for more, he left Berlin.

Undoubtedly much of the persistent animus of his many foes was due to the fact that they could not bear to see the operatic stage at Berlin dominated by a foreigner. With all his faults, his great services and his good qualities

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merited a happier finale. Meyerbeer succeeded him as director of the Royal Opera. Spontini returned to Italy, his health impaired by his strenuous experience, but later he revisited Berlin and was graciously received by the sovereign whom he was supposed to have affronted.

It is interesting to note that in 1844 he had gone to Dresden and there conducted with his old vehemence a performance of his own opera, "*La Vestale*," for which no less a "Vorbe-reiter" (preparer) than Richard Wagner had drilled the participants. Wagner gives an amusing account of the occasion in his collected writings.

Spontini, bequeathing his property to the poor, died at Majolati, Italy, in 1851.

BOIELDIEU AND OTHERS

François Boieldieu (1775–1834) is often styled the founder of a new era in opéra-comique. His "*La dame blanche*" (1825) was exceedingly successful in his epoch and is occasionally revived in Europe to-day. Its subject is Scotch, and its plot is a compound of Scott's "Guy Mannering" and "The Monastery." As a musical comedy of exemplary refinement it deserves to be called a classic of its

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kind, and it is primarily responsible for the high place accorded Boieldieu as a master of this genre.

Boieldieu and any profound philosophy were utter strangers to each other, but he composed with alluring piquancy, if not poignancy, and technical deftness. In his light operas, true to the opéra-comique type, he used much spoken dialogue, in offset to the lyric numbers, but with a distinct melodic gift, a buoyancy of touch, and an ingratiating sprightliness. He occasionally wrote in a more serious vein, and was not wanting in tender sentiment. Besides "*La dame blanche*," Boieldieu won popular approval with "*Le Calife de Bagdad*" and "*Jean de Paris*." From 1800 to 1830 he ranked as the leading purveyor of opéra-comique.

F. Paer (1771–1839), born in Parma, delightfully parodied Italian operatic music of the serious sort, in his one French work, "*Le maître de chapelle*," which still keeps his memory green with an occasional revival. In Paris he conducted the orchestra of the Théâtre-Italien until Rossini replaced him.

Daniel François Esprit Auber (1782–1871) is called the last of the masters of the old school of opéra-comique. A Parisian to the finger-tips and the pen-point, he wrote to please

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the "beau monde" of Paris and attained his aim with a long list of works that showed a nimble wit, sparkling vivacity (was not *Esprit* his middle name?), the appealing naïveté of the popular chanson that is traditional among the French, and remarkable skill in depicting character with subtle intimations. As a writer of opéra-comique he was best known by "*Le Maçon*," "*La Fiancée*," "*Fra Diavolo*" (a briskly moving work not infrequently heard to-day), "*Le cheval de bronze*," (The Bronze Horse), "*Le domino noir*" (The Black Domino), "*Les diamants de la couronne*" (The Crown Diamonds)—the last approximating grand opera in its dimensions and in the dynamic resources enlisted.

One of Auber's operas, "*La Muette de Portici*" (The Dumb Girl of Portici), whose heroine is a mute and therefore songless, helped to make history when in 1830 its performance at Brussels, with its stirring patriotic melodies reflecting the revolutionary spirit in the air, inspired the riots which drove the Dutch out of Belgium. Known usually to English audiences as "*Masaniello*," from the hero's name, it is, as we have already seen, a member of the school of "historic opera," to which such works as Rossini's "*William Tell*," Meyerbeer's "*Les Huguenots*," and Wagner's

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"*Rienzi*" belong—music that is the reflex of the national state of mind induced by the effulgent military glories of the Napoleonic régime.

Two other composers of opéra-comique deserving of mention were L. J. F. Herold (1791–1833), and Adolphe Adam (1803–1856). Herold, who achieved at times the grand manner in his orchestration, reached his zenith with "*Le Pré aux Clercs*" and "*Zampa*." Adam, whose humor was unleavened, gave a few good songs to the tenor in "*Le Postillon de Longjumeau*," and once in a while Parisians accept his "*Le Chalet*" (The Cottage) and "*Si j'étais roi*" (If I were King).

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Simultaneously with the fullest flowering of the opéra-comique, Giacomo (properly Jacob) Meyerbeer (1791–1864) developed in France the historical opera and set an influential example, in this species of music-drama, to his contemporaries.

Meyerbeer, born in Berlin but owing most of his success to Paris, is especially remembered for "*Robert le Diable*," 1831; "*Les Huguenots*," 1836; "*Le Prophète*," 1843; "*Dinorah*," 1859; "*L'Africaine*," 1838–1865. His music is often pompous and pretentious: he displays

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Liszt's affection for imposing and bombastic climaxes. But at times he achieves truly majestic effects and with the aid of an enthusiastic stage-manager and an opulent impresario to support the score with gorgeous scenic effects his operas make a successful appeal to our contemporary taste—as the revival of "*L'Africaine*" by the Metropolitan Opera Company in recent seasons has demonstrated.

Mendel in his biography of Meyerbeer points out the sources from which Meyerbeer, who was as indefatigable as Spontini, derived his inspiration. "He did not shrink, as a man, from the unremitting, insatiable industry he had shown as a boy, and he buried himself in the literature of French opera, from the days of Lulli onward. . . . It was interesting to see in his library hundreds of opera-scores great and small, many of which were hardly known by name even to the most initiated. . . . In his later works we see that to the flowing melody of the Italians and the solid harmony of the Germans he united the pathetic declamation and the varied, piquant rhythm of the French."

No composer was harder on his librettist, or on those who with instruments and voices strove to realize his intentions. Spontini him-

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self did not recast and retouch his measures with more anxious, nervous assiduity. On every detail of the production, Meyerbeer lavished suggestion and supervision, so that those unlucky enough to be his managers must often have wished themselves far from the scene. To him, the least unfavorable criticism was vexatious: a disparaging word hurt him more than columns of praise could please him.

The prolific Eugene Scribe, who had supplied Auber with forty texts, was the author of the librettos for "*Les Huguenots*," "*Robert le Diable*," "*Le Prophète*," "*L'Etoile du Nord*" (The Star of the North), and "*L'Africaine*." He therefore had to stand the brunt of Meyerbeer's splenetic humors. For the composer gave as much heed to the words as to the music, and insisted on revision and condensation till Scribe lost patience. Especially was this true of "*L'Africaine*." In the libretto of this work Meyerbeer demanded so many alterations that Scribe lost his temper and stalked off with his manuscript under his arm. But peaceful relations were resumed when Meyerbeer asked Scribe for the libretto of "*Le Prophète*," and proclaimed his satisfaction with the story which inflamed his imagination and inspired one of his most successful efforts.

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Meyerbeer has been both praised and damned without reserve. Wagner and Schumann found him a charlatan and a mountebank. Among French critics he has had extravagant admirers. Paul Landormy in his "History of Music" is sufficiently detached to say that Meyerbeer's art "is very external, an art of poses, grand gestures, and melodramatic effects." He "hid the psychological poverty of his works beneath the magic attraction of great historical scenes. . . . How empty his rhetoric and pathos sound to our ears! . . . Meyerbeer wished to gain fame during his lifetime, at any cost."

Yet, when these limitations, grave as they are, have been admitted, much remains on the credit side to balance his account. Even on those who decried him, his masterful handling of dramatic orchestration was not without its impress. Schumann and Wagner, who offered such disparaging comment, were of one mind in extolling the tremendous scene of the consecration of the swords and the final interview of Valentine and Raoul in "*The Huguenots*." The resort to banal and meretricious artifice must not blind us to the fact that even when the fount of inspiration runs dry, Meyerbeer ingeniously hides his paucity of ideas and invention with artifices of picturesque and arresting

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novelty if not of profound significance. Sir C. H. H. Parry, in his "Evolution of the Art of Music," remarks that when Meyerbeer is wholly destitute of an idea he distracts your attention from the fact with a cadenza for the clarinet.

If in profound and genuine psychological subtlety he leaves much to ask, and if he is all too ready to pander to the popular taste rather than attempt its elevation, yet he manifests a sure instinct for the theatrically effective scene, and its appropriate musical enhancement. The immediate spell of a Meyerbeer opera was overwhelming and the audience willingly succumbed to it; only in sober retrospect did the hearer discover the tawdriness beneath the tinsel-gilt.

"*Robert le Diable*," produced in 1831 with much *éclat*, belongs to the Romantic school. It outlived most of the other operas, save the one by which the composer will be longest and best remembered—the historical opera "*Les Huguenots*."

The story of "*Les Huguenots*" deals with the effort of Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre, to reconcile the contending Catholics and Huguenots. She persuades the Count de Saint Bris, a Catholic, to let his daughter Valentine marry the young Huguenot noble,

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Raoul de Nangis. Valentine is betrothed to the Count de Nevers, but in a nocturnal interview at his own palace she persuades the latter to release her from the engagement. But Raoul, who loved her from the first, has seen her conversing with Nevers, and, misinterpreting her motive, decides to forget her forever. The Queen summons him, and tells him he is to marry Valentine, whom he has known only by sight, not by name. When he finds that his intended bride is the lady he has beheld in compromising conference with Nevers, he repudiates her, and vows that death is preferable to such a marriage.

Valentine, while praying in a chapel, overhears her father's plot to end the life of Raoul in revenge for the affront. Valentine warns Marcel, Raoul's faithful old servitor, who summons his comrades-in-arms. During the fight that ensues, the Queen enters. She rebukes the foemen, and tells Raoul the true story of the meeting of Valentine and the Count de Nevers.

Raoul has an interview with Valentine at the house of the Count de Nevers. Her father comes, and Valentine conceals her lover behind the arras. Thence he hears St. Bris describe his plan for the massacre of St. Bartholomew, to occur that very night. There follows the

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great scene of the consecration of the swords to the destruction of the Huguenots. When the conspirators have gone, the affecting parting of Raoul and Valentine takes place. He leaps from the window as the tocsin sounds, and goes to his doom. In a final scene, Raoul warns Henry of Navarre and the Huguenot nobles. During the mêlée that follows, Valentine joins him, and after an ineffectual attempt to make him wear the white scarf of safety dies in his arms after the faithful Marcel—himself wounded and dying—has pronounced the marriage service above them.

No composer ever toiled more diligently over the score of his operas than Meyerbeer, and if ceaseless revision could assure a title to fame, the guerdon would go to the man who, fêted and laureled in his prime, is alive to-day chiefly through his influence upon the works of other men. That influence may even be traced in the dramatic orchestration of the greatest operatic genius, Richard Wagner.

The development of opéra-comique continued with Jacques Fromental Halévy (born at Paris, 1799, died 1862). None of his works in this genre survives him. His grand opera, "*La Juive*," in which Caruso found perhaps his favorite rôle as Eleazar, was his supreme achievement. He was one of many composers

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who have suffered from overproduction, and he obviously imitated Meyerbeer. Ambroise Thomas (who died in 1896) and Friedrich von Flotow (who died in 1883) are other noteworthy producers of this kind of opera. "*Mignon*" and "*Hamlet*," both of course in the serious vein of grand opera, were Thomas' best bids for lasting remembrance. His inventive faculty is not equal to his skillful orchestration. By the rippling, easy fluency of "*Martha*" von Flotow is often recalled; and his "*Stradella*" was revived by the Philadelphia Operatic Society as recently as 1924.

GOUNOD'S "FAUST"

Charles Gounod (1818-1893), a Parisian of the Parisians, is one of the most important of the French opera composers. The shaping and influencing models of his earliest effort he found in the works of Mozart, Rossini, and Weber. His first formal education came from his mother, a fine pianist, but in 1836 he became a pupil of Halévy, Paer, and Lesueur at the Paris Conservatory. A visit to Italy inflamed his imagination and acquainted him with the infinite polyphonic riches discoverable in the works of Bach and Palestrina.

After his return from Italy, his discomfiture

GOUNOD'S "FAUST"

over the unwillingness of the publishers to print his songs, and the indifference of the public to his opera "*Sapho*" was so great that he contemplated entering a religious order. But "*Faust*," produced at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1859, with Madame Miolan-Carvalho as Marguerite, took him out of a twilight zone of obscurity and set him in the full blaze of popular approval and renown. "*Faust*" has been called the most famous of operas. Since it was taken over by the Paris Opera in 1869, with an additional ballet, it has become one of the prime favorites in the repertoire.

"Its attractiveness," says Clarence Hamilton, "comes from the ravishingly sensuous and vocal charm of its music, which, without resorting to the device of the Wagnerian leit-motiv, yet emotionally characterizes each person and scene, embracing varied and interesting recitatives between its charming solos and ensembles."

But it is not great music. It reminds one of Massenet in its constant resort to the devices that enhance the sentimental effect. The "sensuous" quality often verges upon the saccharine, and is almost cloying. One is drenched and surfeited with the typical operatic emotions, and has the feeling that the composer forever visualizes a public to be pleased,

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and is writing on a plane of lyric and mellifluous felicity more congenial to himself and to his hearers than any display of rugged, uncompromising musical mentality. He "hovered between mysticism and voluptuousness," one commentator observes, adding that too often the lyric element has the upper hand in his work at the cost of variety and dramatic truth. But his capacity as a master of orchestration is unquestionable, and he deserves the lofty rating accorded him as a musician.

"*Roméo et Juliette*" is not considered equal to "*Faust*," but it has won in France an almost equal popularity. Though Gounod in his latter years cared far less for secular music, and devoted himself to grandiose religious compositions in which his mystic fervor found expression, among his posthumous works are two operas, "*Maître Pierre*" and "*Georges Dandin*." "*La Reine de Saba*" achieved a measure of popularity. Through his religious music, rather than his dramatic compositions, Gounod acquired in London—where he lived at the time of the Franco-Prussian War—a following and an influence which might be compared with the ascendancy of Handel and Mendelssohn. His three great oratorios, "*Tobie*," "*Redemption*," and "*Mors et Vita*" brought him enduring fame.

JULES MASSENET

JULES MASSENET

Jules Frédéric Emile Massenet (1842–1912) is akin to Gounod or to Saint-Saëns in the sensuous melodicality of his scores, which are often too saccharine to please a sober and dispassionate critical judgment. Of their popular appeal there can be no question: the “*Religious Meditation*” from “*Thaïs*” takes rank with the “*Intermezzo*” from “*Cavalleria Rusticana*” or the “*Sextet*” from “*Lucia*” as among the most popular operatic numbers that have ever been written.

Massenet is as essentially Parisian as Gounod. Born at Montaud, near St. Etienne, he supported himself in youth by playing the kettle-drum in small café orchestras. He received his musical education at the Paris Conservatory, where he took the first piano prize and other distinctions—notably the coveted “*Prix de Rome*” in 1863. When he returned from Italy, through the kindly offices of Ambroise Thomas, Massenet’s “*La Grand’tante*” was given at the Opéra-Comique; and its instant success established the fact that Massenet commanded a style of ease, felicity, and grace.

He first made a salient place for himself among the younger school of French composers, however, when his “*Don César de*

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Bazan," an opéra-comique in three acts and four tableaux, was brought out in 1872. "*Le Roi de Lahore*" (The King of Lahore), gorgeously revived in 1923-24 by the Metropolitan Opera Company, was the spectacular production of 1877. "*Hérodiade*," a religious opera which had its première in Brussels in 1881, held the stage for a season in that city but came to grief in Paris in 1884, though for the French presentation it had been partially reconstructed by the composer. "*Manon*," which has enjoyed more popularity than Puccini's opera of that name, dated from 1884, and "*Le Cid*" appeared in the following year. "*Werther*" is of the vintage of 1892.

Of "*Manon*" it may be noted that the composer introduced an innovation. The work, because of its lighter nature, is classified as an opéra-comique. For its spoken dialogue, the composer introduced a slightly orchestrated accompaniment, instead of silencing the instruments.

"*Thaïs*," Massenet's most popular opera—owing much of its success in America to the genius of Mary Garden in the title rôle—was first given at the Paris Opera in 1894. "*La Navarraise*," dates from the same year, "*Sapho*" from 1897, "*Cendrillon*" (in which Maggie Teyte was charming) from 1899,

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"*Griselidis*" from 1901. "*Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*" (The Juggler of Notre Dame) was first heard at Monte Carlo in 1902. This is actually an opera without a feminine rôle, but in performance it is advisable to have the name part of the stripling monastic novice sung by a woman's voice, and in her wistful, tender, appealing enactment of the rôle Mary Garden has achieved perhaps the supreme portrayal of her versatile career.

Massenet is in no sense a great composer. "Weak and sugary" says Fuller Maitland of his style, calling his "prolonged and widespread success" a "puzzling phenomenon of modern musical history." But Massenet had an unerring finger for the public pulse. None strove more eagerly to please contemporary taste. His craftsmanship was invariably dexterous, his instrumentation of sophisticated elegance and clarity. As he sought to satisfy his audience, he endeavored in his operatic music to comply with the whims of many prima donnas, whose devoted servitor he frequently became. For he was extremely susceptible to the charms of "the eternal feminine," and was especially concerned to supply the ill-starred Sibyl Sanderson with a vehicle worthy of her beauty and her voice. Both "*Esclarmonde*" (1889) and "*Thaïs*" were written for her.

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CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

Not wholly dissimilar in general character to the mellifluous, sensuous idiom of Massenet is the more substantial and intellectual music of Charles Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) whose Biblical opera "*Samson and Delilah*" is his principal dramatic achievement. Saint-Saëns was a world-citizen, and his cosmopolitanism is reflected in his music. At both ends of his life he was a prodigy: he studied the piano at three and at ten gave a public soirée, and with small abatement of fire and original force was appearing before his devoted Paris public both as conductor and pianist when he was far past his eightieth year. Twice he visited America, in 1915 as France's representative at the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

In his little book "Outspoken Essays on Music" he describes the genesis of "*Samson and Delilah*." Fernand Lemaire, "an amateur poet" who had married into the family, supplied the libretto. The first sketch of the music, minus the orchestration, was heard by Anton Rubinstein "in stony silence." "The composer received not the faintest acknowledgment, even of mere politeness." But years afterwards, Liszt at Weimar was more encouraging. "Finish your opera," he said to the

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

young composer, though he had not heard a note of the work, "and I will produce it for you." The pledge was quite in keeping with Liszt's generous attitude to oncoming musicians.

But the Franco-Prussian War intervened, and—as war always frustrates artistic endeavor—it prevented for a time the fulfilment of Liszt's benevolent intention and Saint-Saëns' eagerly mounting ambition. Not until 1873 was "*Samson and Delilah*" presented, but the deferred success "was great, though not sustained." At Berlin it was alleged that the Weimar success had no meaning or significance whatsoever. It was sung at Hamburg, and that was all.

"Only after a period of ten years was the opera given in France, at Rouen. Paris would have nothing to do with it. M. Ritt had to hear it at the Eden before he would bring himself to produce it at the Opera, during the year of the great eruption of Etna. And I had to travel from Paris to Etna and back to witness both the eruption and the first rehearsal of *Samson*!

"For the storm in the second act, I had been promised the most wonderful *mise-en-scène*. Meanwhile, it had been decided to stage the '*Valkyrie*' immediately afterwards, and all the

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promises made to me were broken. I actually had to protest violently before I could obtain for the beginning of the second act a dash of red to represent the twilight!"

Saint-Saëns, open-minded though he was, detested ultra-modern composers. In an address delivered in 1921 at the opening of the Fontainebleau Music School he held a brief for "the brilliant school of light music" which had produced such figures as Méhul and Auber and given us the ingratiating measures of "*Carmen*" and "*Manon*." But he was severe in his reference to the futurists. "At this very moment," he observed, "the entire world of music is suffering from a like disease: a craving for novelty at any cost. There are people now living who proclaim aloud their right to become a law unto themselves. Persons knowing nothing either of grammar or of orthography, a law unto themselves! We know what the result will be."

Saint-Saëns, if not entirely a proponent of the old order, was a gentleman of the old school in music. He could write in the classical manner of the patriarchs and in the fashion of the program music of our epoch, even though the acrid dissonances were not within his reckoning. He had the unequivocal respect of musicians for his well-wrought, clearly

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

articulate music, with its unerring assurance that included the means in hand as well as the end in view. Of feeble indecision and muddling or boggling Saint-Saëns can never be indicted. The man of the world, the affable, polished, courtly type of personality he represented, seems to receive its autobiographical evocation in the firm, free, vigorous rhythm of the warmly colored and melodiously various measures that he penned. If the grace and elegance of the manner is often more in evidence than the depth or substance of the matter, it is the admitted limitation of a composer who is justly rated among the most admirable figures in music of two centuries.

There have been few musicians to compare with him for brilliancy, versatility, wide range of personal interests, and varied erudition, and his career brought him increasingly the popularity, the material reward, and the critical homage that were denied to many musicians greater than he. To few members of his profession has it been given to bask so long in the sunshine of personal felicity. Yet it must be remembered that the supreme music has come not from such happiness but from the constraining stress and anguish that were the portion of Beethoven, the penury and neglect that were the lot of Schubert's brief lifetime.

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BIZET AND THOMAS

Georges Bizet (1838–1875) in "*Carmen*" produced one of the outstanding masterpieces of operatic literature. "*Carmen*," revealing Wagner's impress, has gorgeous Spanish tone-coloring, is orchestrated with consummate skill and no waste motion of the instruments, and from first to last maintains an unflagging pace with seemingly inexhaustible fertility and an invariable felicity of musical invention. In every respect it is one of the most operatic of operas; and the most censorious and sophisticated listener can suggest neither addition nor subtraction that would improve this lively and alluring score.

The title rôle of "*Carmen*" provides one of the supreme tests of the prima donna. Its interpretation has provoked more discussion than almost any other in the conventional repertoire of mezzo-soprano or contralto. By general consent the best of all Carmens was Emma Calvé, who rose magnificently to the height of its dramatic opportunities and emotional intensities. Calvé's autobiography, "*My Life*," reflects her attitude toward this famous impersonation, and will reward perusal.

"*Mignon*" and "*Hamlet*" are the creations of Ambroise Thomas (1811–1896). He suc-

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ceeded Auber as director of the Paris Conservatory, and the operas named enjoyed a persistent vogue for several decades because of the fancy-seizing tunefulness of such poignant airs as Mignon's famous "*Knowest Thou the Land.*"

Edouard Lalo (1823-1892) wrote "*Le Roi d'Ys*," of tragic and somber character,—a golden opportunity for the stage-manager to atone for any musical inadequacy with an opulent setting. Chabrier wrote the opera-drama "*Gwendoline*" and the opéra-comique "*Le Roi malgré lui*" (The King in Spite of Himself).

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Achille Claude Debussy (1862-1918) displays nothing of Gounod's tendency to follow the line of least resistance in creating an opulence of ear-tickling melody. Even in Conservatory days he defied the saintly César Franck's advice to modulate, and dealt in bold and unusually abrupt progressions, with chords that yield—to ears conventionally trained—acrid and even repellent dissonances. That was partly because he heavily depended on the "whole-tone scale" now so famously associated with his name. This scale consists of six notes,

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separated by equal intervals—*e.g.*, C sharp, D sharp, F, G, A, B. Custom reconciled Debussy's hearers to his "bitter-sweet harmonies," and his heresies of two decades ago are accepted orthodoxies of to-day.

By his willful disregard of the old, established tonalities, Debussy obliterates the former significance of keys, and changes or contrasts of keys. He uses the accepted notation merely for the performer's convenience, and declines to be hampered by the historic legacy of such apparatus as the classical composers employed. Thus he has been a puzzle to the ultra-conservatives, a delight and an incitement to the modern iconoclasts, though many of these consider him already old-fashioned. He is, in despite of his scorn for the rules, a great force to be reckoned with, just as Bernard Shaw, master of inversion and paradox, cannot be neglected in any serious survey of literature. Debussy only a few years ago represented an exotic taste; to-day he is very soberly considered and even admired by some of those who reviled and caviled.

Though Maeterlinck professed to be highly displeased with Debussy's setting, the latter's "*Pelléas et Mélisande*," to the text supplied by the drama of the Belgian, is his outstanding achievement in the field of opera, for "*The*

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Martyrdom of St. Sebastian" more nearly resembles a pantomimic sequence than a conventionally constructed opera. The nebulous, vague atmosphere of Maeterlinck's poem and the groping, other-worldly, mysterious poignancy of the score are admirably suited to each other. Like waves alongshore, Debussy's instrumentation of the mournful story is in constant restless modulation, as though it rose and receded again in imitation of the ocean's unending inquietude—a reflex of the "eternal passion, eternal pain" in human hearts and lives. Most of Debussy's followers have probably had the experience, reflected in Pope's familiar line, and have found themselves enduring ere they embraced the music. But since Debussy penned this score, the futurists of music have gone so much further in their revolt against set forms and patterns of old, that "*Pelléas et Mélisande*" now seems almost as rudimentary as the alphabet itself.

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Among the minor figures of the modern French school deserving mention is Gustave Charpentier (1860) whose best-known opera is "*Louise*." A sequel, "*Julien*," was not so fortunate. "*Louise*" tells an old, familiar

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story of parental constraint and filial revolt. It is remarkable for the successful transference of a dressmaker's atelier to the stage, and "Main Street" itself has not a homelier atmosphere than that of the workingman's dwelling whose dull routine proves unbearable to the young girl in love with the glamour of the city whose very name is music in her ears. This opera is the expression in terms of melody of a sincere personal interest in working-people which Charpentier has shown by the foundation of a club and a music-school for working-girls.

The libretto of "*Louise*," which Charpentier himself wrote, has been called by some critics the finest in any modern opera. Edward B. Hill in "Modern French Music" says: "Charpentier, who wrote his own text in prose, has contrived a simple drama in real life, full of effective contrasts, adroit observation of character, and truth to human nature. . . . Throughout '*Louise*,' Charpentier's musical invention is unflagging. . . . Its dominant note, both orchestrally and musically, lies in its spontaneity."

Alfred Bruneau (Paris, 1857) is classed as "one of the notable forces in the impressionistic French school": an audacious innovator, he is never averse to the unconventional, and abhors the stiff and stilted pattern, however recom-

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mended by authority. Like Saint-Saëns, he has been a far traveler, and his work bears witness to his cosmopolitan and eclectic taste. Of his numerous operas the best-known in America is "*L'Attaque du Moulin*" (The Attack on the Mill) (1893). He is a champion of the realistic (what would be called in Italy the "verismo") school, and has derived librettos from the plots of Zola's novels.

Gabriel Pierné (1863) is a prolific opera-composer, who succeeded César Franck as organist at Ste. Clothilde and followed Colonne as director of his renowned orchestra. Ernest Chausson (1855-1899), a greatly gifted pupil of Massenet and Franck, is the author of the admired "*Le Roi Arthus*" (1900). A rival of Saint-Saëns in longevity was Louis Etienne Ernest Reyer, born at Marseilles, in 1823, who died in 1909. Reyer, who revealed such decided skill in his instrumentation that he has been favorably compared with Berlioz, is the author of "*Salammbô*" (1890), and of several other works that have been well received.

Paul Dukas (1865) is the author of "*Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*," in which Bluebeard's last wife divertingly upsets tradition and leads the previously imprisoned wives to freedom. Henri Fevrier's "*Monna Vanna*" and "*Gis-*

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monda" have received both critical and popular endorsement. Reynaldo Hahn's "*Nausicaa*" has met with favor. Alberic Magnard, a musician of noble ideals who died in 1914 while defending his own home against the Germans, is accredited with "*Yolande*," "*Guerceur*," and "*Bérénice*."

Henri Rabund's "*Marouf*" has been produced in America, but those who heard it realized that the score meant less than the scenic investiture, and the opera did not win for its author the enthusiasm evoked by his symphonic composition or by his urbane direction of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Similarly, Jean Nougues' "*Quo Vadis*" depended for its appeal on the stirring nature of the stage transactions rather than on the music.

Bemberg's "*Elaine*" proclaims his discipleship to Gounod and Massenet. Gabriel Dupont, pupil of the great organist Widor, produced "*Antar*" in 1921. Camille Erlanger, who died in 1919, is known for "*The Polish Jew*" (1900) and "*Aphrodite*" (1906). Leborne, with "*Les Girondins*," in 1905, and "*Cléopâtre*" in 1914, has made a name for himself, as have Georges Monty (who died in 1908) with "*Daria*" and Xavier Leroux with "*La Reine Fiammetta*" (1903), produced in New York in 1919.

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Among other French opera composers of our epoch may be mentioned Paul Vidal (with another "*La Reine Fiammetta*"), Anton Simon, Charles Silver, Charles Lenepreu (1840–1910), Georges Palicot, Max d'Ollone, Edmond Missa, whose works are of an operetta character, Samuel Rousseau, André Gedalge, Felix Fourdrain. Albert Roussel, born at Tourcoing in 1869, one of the most important French composers of to-day, has written a curious ballet in which various human passions are delineated with spiders as the *dramatis personæ*; the work, however, is hardly to be classed as operatic.

Maurice Ravel, the truly distinguished impressionist, brought out a one-act comedy opera "*L'Heure Espagnole*" in 1911, and has also written "*La Cloche Engloutie*" (The Sunken Bell). Eric Satie, patron saint of the disbanded group who styled themselves "The Six," wrote the comic opera "*Paul et Virginie*." Of "The Six," Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Georges Auric, and Francis Poulenc have written operas of something better than sound and fury, since in the midst of their ardent radicalism they profess a devotion to the simple, lucid idiom of Mendelssohn. The tenets and contributions of this group will receive larger treatment in a later volume.

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EPILOGUE

We have now traced in outline the course of the history of French opera from the day when it consisted largely of Italian importation and imitation under such men as Lully and Rameau, till our own time, when—in such works as Charpentier's "*Louise*" or Debussy's "*Pelléas et Mélisande*"—we find a native product of originality, upon an independent footing, prophesying still greater accomplishment in days to come. We have seen that French opera developed dramatic values as Italian opera tended to magnify the figure of the individual performer. We have noted the particular genius of the French in the development of the opéra-comique, relieving the excessive sobriety of grand opera (called tragédie-lyrique when its libretto conformed to the classic rules of French tragedy). This opéra-comique, it has been noted, was a derivation of the Italian opera buffa; "its other parent," as Apthorp happily remarks, "was the native French vaudeville." But we find that this opéra-comique itself is often of such a comparatively sedate, circumspect character that its sole differentiation from grand opera is its occasional resort to spoken dialogue.

At the close of our survey, we find ourselves

EPILOGUE

asking the question: "Why have some of the operas named made and held a place in the popular affection and in critical regard, while others have enjoyed at best a lukewarm or apathetic reception and have speedily been consigned to oblivion?"

The lesson of contemporary indifference and subsequent neglect is that the public soon ceases to pay tribute to composers who follow the beaten track of approved successes with feeble imitation, or who, having achieved renown with a *tour-de-force*, copy their own initial venture instead of following the bent of an original and creative force wheresoever it may lead.

For every opera composer who has caught the public ear and made his niche in the operatic hall of fame, there has been an innumerable host of lesser figures who were slavish imitators, and who assumed that if they walked exactly in his steps they would arrive.

Some composers have succeeded by virtue of a gift of insinuating melody, and little else. There is nothing phenomenally inspired in the orchestration of Donizetti, or in the works of Verdi's early and middle periods, or in the plastic resourcefulness of Gounod, Massenet, and Saint-Saëns. But they made enticing and inciting tunes—tunes that were carried away from the opera house into the echoing

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thoroughfare, to become part of the very life of those who heard and reheard them.

There were also composers who, like Debussy, Bruneau, Ravel, Satie, and "The Six," thought out fresh idioms and new modes of harmony, and were derided and decried as wild men writing for a far future that would abhor them. The future can take care of their fame, and the verdict of posterity will determine whether they belong with those who merely ministered to the gayety of nations or with that "one great society alone on earth, the noble living and the noble dead."

III

MINOR CONTRIBUTORS TO OPERA

MODERN OPERA IN OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

IN the list of Spanish opera composers are such men as Arrieta, the Valverdes, Manuel de Falla, Caballero. The Spanish *zarzuela* is akin to our operetta, and the two Valverdes have each written about sixty works of the kind. Manuel de Falla, who studied with Dukas and Debussy, is the author of "*La Vida Breve*" (1913).

Among the Hollanders are Henry Brandt-Buys (1851-1905), who wrote "*Albrecht Beyling*," and his nephew, Jan, author of "*The Three Tailors of Shonau*" and similar works.

Ole Olsen of Norway has "*Stig Hvide*" to his credit, and his compatriot Erik-Meyer-Helmund composed "*Frau Marties*" and other operas. Denmark's opera writers include August Enna and Haakon Børresen; one of her imaginative composers has recently produced a work whose personnel is Eskimo and whose scene is laid in Greenland.

Czecho-Slovakia has many names to add to

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the honor-roll. Emil Nikolaus, Freiheer von Reznicek, has been one of the most successful and prolific of composers. His works are distinguished by exuberant animation and indubitable artistic merit. Like Wagner, he has fashioned his own texts. "*Donna Diana*" (1894) is his capital achievement. Joseph Nesvers' "*Perdita*" was acclaimed at Prague in 1897. Most popular of all Czech operas is the melodious and sprightly "*Bartered Bride*," by the renowned, but ill-starred Friedrich Smetana (1824-1884). Zdenko Fibich has evinced a pronounced German influence in his operatic compositions.

The chief Hungarian name is that of Franz Erkel, founder of the national school. Jenő Hubay, the violinist, has written several operas, including one based on Tolstoy's tragic story of Anna Karénina. The eminent pianist Dohnányi is the composer of "*Tante Simona*," which appeared in 1912.

Open air opera has been produced with great success during the summer of 1924 at Zopot, a summer resort near Danzig. Professor Merz, director of the Danzig opera, gave the performance of "*The Valkyrie*." Ten thousand persons saw each presentation, and the dramatic effect was immeasurably enhanced by the spaciousness of the natural amphitheatre.

OTHER MODERN EUROPEAN OPERA

tre, the white magic of the starry heavens, the environment of forest and rocky height. The Brünnhilda was Freda Leider of the Berlin Opera; Gertrude Geyersbach of Vienna had the rôle of Siegelinde; Otto Helgers of Berlin was Siegmund.

Pietro Mascagni, composer of "*Cavalleria Rusticana*," boldly invaded Vienna with a thoroughly Italian presentment of "*Aïda*." Enthusiastic audiences numbered twenty thousand. Zenatello, well known to American audiences through Hammerstein's introduction, was Rhadames; Maria Gay impersonated Amneris, and Poli Randaccio was the heroine. The performances took place outdoors at the Hobe Warte, a suburban athletic field.

In the summer of 1924 a new English opera "*Hugh the Drover*," with music by Vaughan Williams (composer of the London Symphony) and the book by Harold Child, made an excellent impression in London. The scene, like that of many Russian operas, has been described as "a skillful web of folk tunes and quasi-folk tunes." These are neither bel canto arias of the mellifluous Italian species, nor leading motives of the German pattern, but there is strenuous dynamic action, culminating in a knock-down-and-drag-out prize-fight which has given the new work no little

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notoriety in the press. The company, at His Majesty's Theatre, spared no effort to present the opera persuasively. The audiences and the critics seem agreed that music and libretto jointly convey the very essence of the Old England of the Tory fox-hunting squire, the inn and the garden, the stage coach and the bucolic mirth of the village with a strong infiltration of tender sentiment. It is called "a romantic ballad opera" and it seems to answer to the title in its content and its character.

In July of the same year, Purcell's "*Dido and Æneas*" was revived out-of-doors in Hyde Park, some seven hundred professionals and amateurs participating. Thus the older and the newest examples of English opera simultaneously were in competition for public favor, and it is gratifying to record that both promotions were successful alike from the financial and the artistic standpoints.

OPERA ON THE AMERICAN CONTINENT

Many Americans have composed operas, but thus far their success has not been conspicuous. It has been difficult for our writers to escape the impress of European tradition, and it cannot be said that we have developed a school or an idiom of fearless independence

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and initiative to match our manifestation of the creative instinct in other fields. Opera is a sophisticated art-product; and it takes root most congenially in soil that has been long tilled and cultivated.

But several attempts to produce successful music-dramas are heraldic indications that we shall not always be in an apologetic mood, reiterating the plea: "We are a young country, and industry in a pioneer epoch must take precedence of art."

There is, for example, Horatio Parker's "*Mona*," with its truly poetic and euphonious libretto by Brian Hooker, which took the \$10,000 prize of the Metropolitan Opera Company, and was produced by that organization in 1912. The collaboration proved that opera may be written in the English tongue and still offer the singer mellifluous, cantabile syllables. The harsh jargon we have sometimes expected singers to utter, has been largely responsible for public indifference to the propaganda.

Parker's "*Fairyland*," with its book by the same able librettist, was given at the Los Angeles Festival of the National Federation of Women's Clubs in 1915. Parker's muse is not wholly emancipated from pedantic forms. At his best (in his sacred choral compositions)

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he reveals a fine instinct for proportion, for rhythm, and the cumulative effect of massed instruments and voices in music of gracious cadence and sinuous outline. But at times his resolutions seem abrupt, his progressions cryptic, his dissonances awkward. The opera "*Mona*," smelling of the lamp, was shelved after a few performances, though it received its meed of praise.

The versatile Walter Damrosch wrote several operas: "*The Scarlet Letter*," 1896, "*The Dove of Peace*," 1912, "*Cyrano de Bergerac*," 1913. None enjoyed more than a transient popularity. "*Poia*," an opera with an Indian theme, by Arthur Nevin of Edgeworth, Pennsylvania, was given at Berlin in 1910—the first American work presented at the Royal Opera. John Knowles Paine (1839–1906), trained in Berlin, wrote "*Azara*," upon a Moorish theme; it was produced in concert form in the year of his death. His pupil, Frederick Converse (born at Newton, Mass., 1871), wrote the first American opera given at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. This was "*The Pipe of Desire*," presented in 1910. Four of the performers were Americans, namely, Louise Homer, Riccardo Martin, Clarence Whitehill, and Herbert Witherspoon.

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Victor Herbert's "*Natoma*," with a feeble Spanish-American libretto by the Californian Redding, had its première at Philadelphia in 1911.

The most ambitious operatic attempt of Henry K. Hadley (born at Somerville, Mass., 1871), has been "*Cleopatra's Night*" (brought out in New York by the Metropolitan Company in 1920). L. A. Coerne (1870-1922), a Paine pupil, wrote "*A Woman of Marblehead*" and "*Zenobia*" (the latter given at Bremen in 1905).

During the season 1926-27, the first American opera to be given in Paris was presented at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. It is "*Celui qui épousa une femme muette*"—a musical version of Anatole France's comedy, "The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife." Eugene Bonner, the composer, born in Jacksonville, North Carolina, was musically educated at the Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore, Maryland. Charles Wakefield Cadman's "*Shanewis*" was included in the Metropolitan repertoire in 1918. It made but a fugitive impression.

A Chinese grand opera company has been giving well-attended performances at the Bowery Theatre, New York. It began its American tour at Vancouver and then appeared for

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a fortnight at Seattle. The leading prima donna is Princess Chan Wu Fong, a Manchu, who might be compared with Tamaki Miura of "*Madame Butterfly*" fame, the Japanese soprano who has successfully coped with the alien tradition and tonality of European opera. In the Chinese company, Chang Sun Yeh is the leading tenor, and the repertoire includes more than a score of operas presenting Chinese history in beguiling terms of scenery and setting, the orchestra employing native instruments.

A leading opera house in the eastern hemisphere is at Tiflis, Georgia. Here Chaliapin made his debut, and from this active center Nina Koshetz was imported several seasons ago by the Metropolitan Opera Company. The repertoire, largely of Russian works, is at once more extended and more varied than that of the Metropolitan Company, and the stage devices are of up-to-date ingenuity and complexity.

One of the world's most celebrated opera houses is the Colon of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where the standard maintained is of the highest, and some Italian singers have been heard who are still unknown to the theatres of North America. Caruso and other eminent artists have also appeared at Havana, where the ex-

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cellent San Carlo Opera Company of the indefatigable Fortune Gallo has enjoyed several successful seasons. São Paulo, Brazil, has a magnificent opera house, which at present is mainly given over to motion pictures.

Visiting companies have been cordially welcomed in the City of Mexico, but some of the song-birds have found that altitude (over 7500 feet) militated against the happiest results. Many Central American and South American cities maintain opera houses where performances of grand opera are occasionally given. For example, at Panama a performance of "*Aïda*" drew an enthusiastic throng of the native population as well as of Canal employees.

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OPERAS AND OPERATIC SELECTIONS

*(Only a few of the well-known selections are
mentioned)*

AUBER, DANIEL FRANÇOIS ESPRIT

FRA DIAVOLO

Agnes, Beautiful Flower

MASANIELLO

LA MUETTE DE PORTICI

MANON LESCAUT

Laughing Song

BALFE, MICHAEL

THE BOHEMIAN GIRL

I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls
Then You'll Remember Me

BELLINI, VINCENZO

NORMA

Costa Diva

Hear Me, Norma

LA SONNAMBULA

When Daylight's Going
Ah! non credea mirarti

BIZET, GEORGES

CARMEN

Toreador Song

Habanera

OPERAS AND OPERATIC SELECTIONS

BOIELDIEU, FRANÇOIS

LA DAME BLANCHE

LE CALIFE DE BAGDAD

BOITO, ARRIGO

MEFISTOFELE

L'Altra Notte

From the Green Fields

NERONE

BOROWSKI, FELIX

BOUDOUR

CADMAN, CHARLES WAKEFIELD

SHANEWIS

Song of the Robin Woman

CHARPENTIER, GUSTAVE

LOUISE

Depuis le Jour

CHERUBINI, MARIA LUIGI

LES DEUX JOURNÉES

Guide Thou My Steps

DAMROSCH, WALTER

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

DAVID, FÉLICIE

LE DÉSERT

PEARL OF BRAZIL

Thou Brilliant Bird

DEBUSSY, CLAUDE

L'ENFANT PRODIGE

PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE

ST. SEBASTIAN

OPERAS AND OPERATIC SELECTIONS

DELIBES, LEO

LAKMÉ

Bell Song

Vieni al contento

DONIZETTI, GAETANO

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

Mad Scene

Sextet

Chorus from Finale

LUCREZIO BORGIA

O Italia, Italia Beloved

THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

DUKAS, PAUL

ARIANE ET BARBE-BLEUE

VON FLOTOW, FRIEDRICH

MARTHA

Good Night

Spinning Wheel Quartet

GOUNOD, CHARLES

FAUST

Soldiers' Chorus

Jewel Song

Prison Scene

ROMEO AND JULIET

Juliet's Waltz Song

HADLEY, HENRY

CLEOPATRA'S NIGHT

HALÉVY, JACQUES

LA JUIVE

OPERAS AND OPERATIC SELECTIONS

Rachel! Quand du Seigneur

HERBERT, VICTOR

NATOMA

Dagger Dance

Spring Song

LALO, EDOUARD

LE ROI D'YS

LEONCAVALLO, RUGGIERO

I PAGLIACCI

Prologue

Vesti la giubba

Ye Birds Without Number

ZAZA

Zaza piccola zingara

MASCAGNI, PIETRO

CAVALLERIO RUSTICANA

Opening Chorus

Intermezzo

Regina Colli

Siciliana

MASSENET, JULES

THAÏS

Meditation

With Holy Water Anoint Me

MANON

Farewell, Our Little Table

DON QUICHOTTE

CLÉOPÂTRE

Air de la lettre

OPERAS AND OPERATIC SELECTIONS

JONGLEUR DE NOTRE-DAME

Legend of the Sagebrush

MÉHUL, ETIENNE-HENRI

JOSEPH

MEYERBEER, JACOB

LES HUGUENOTS

Fairer than the Lily

Benediction of the Swords

LE PROPHÈTE

Ah, mon fils

DINORAH

Shadow Song

ROBERT LE DIABLE

MONTEMEZZI, ITALO

L'AMORE DEI TRE RE

NICOLAI, OTTO

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

Overture

PARKER, HORATIO

MONA

PONCHIELLI, AMILCARE

LA GIOCONDA

Cielo e mar

Dance of the Hours

Voce di donna

PUCCINI, GIACOMO

MANON LESCAUT

LA BOHÈME

Rudolph's Narrative

OPERAS AND OPERATIC SELECTIONS

Farewell, Sweet Love

Musette Waltz

TOSCA

Cantabile di Scarpia

Vissi d'Arte

MADAME BUTTERFLY

Duet of the Flowers

Un bel di vedremo

THE GIRL OF THE GOLDEN WEST

Ch'ella mi creda

TURANDOT

RAVEL, MAURICE

L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE

ROSSINI, GIOACHINO

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

Largo al factotum

Una Voce poco fa

WILLIAM TELL

Overture

SAINT-SAËNS, CAMILLE

SAMSON AND DELILAH

Bacchanale

Delilah's Song of Spring

Love, Thy Aid

My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice

SPONTINI, GASPARO

MASANIELLO

LA VESTALE

THOMAS, AMBROISE

OPERAS AND OPERATIC SELECTIONS

MIGNON

Polonaise

HAMLET

Monologo

LE CAÏD

Drum Major's Air

VERDI, GIUSEPPI

AÏDA

Triumphal March

Céleste Aïda

The Fatal Stone

ERNANI

Ferma crudele

O Somme Carlo

FORZA DEL DESTINO

Solemne in quest'ora

IL TROVATORE

Ai nostri monti

Anvil Chorus

Miserere

LA TRAVIATA

Ah fors' è lui

OTELLO

Credo

Willow Song

We Swear by Heaven and Earth

RIGOLETTO

La Donna è mobile

Monologo

OPERAS AND OPERATIC SELECTIONS

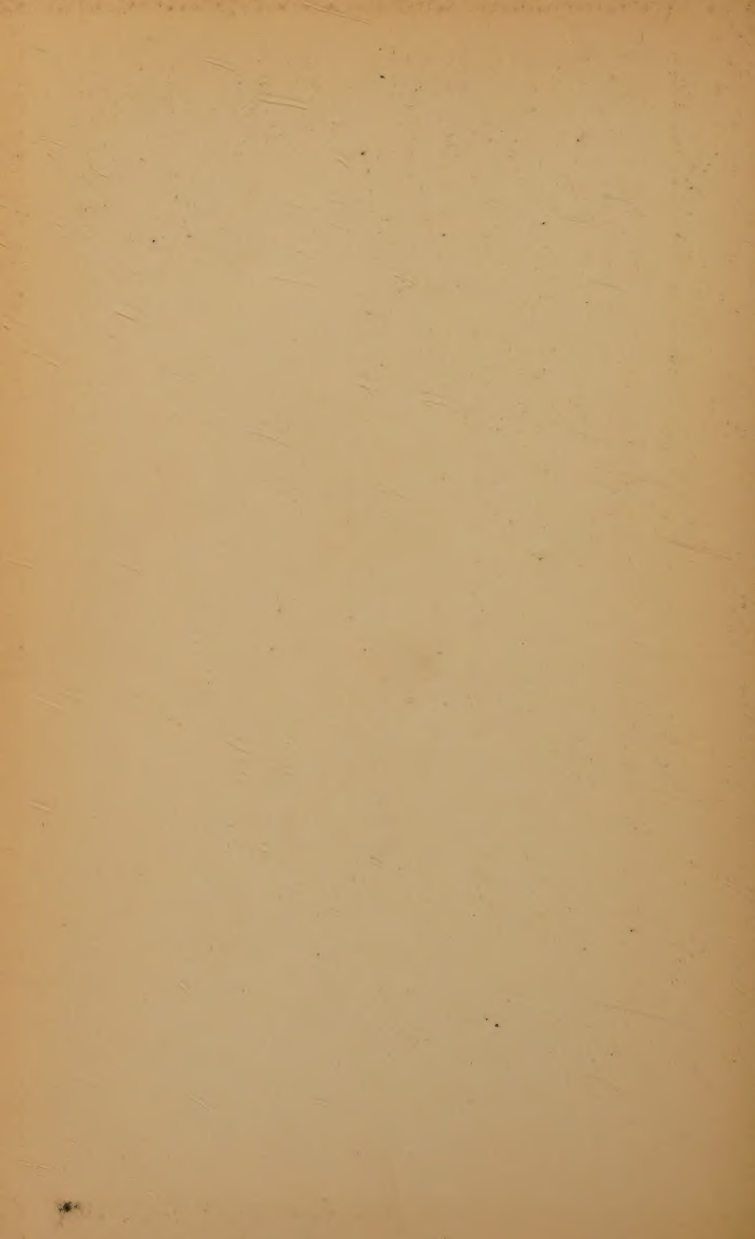
WOLF-FERRARI, ERMANNO

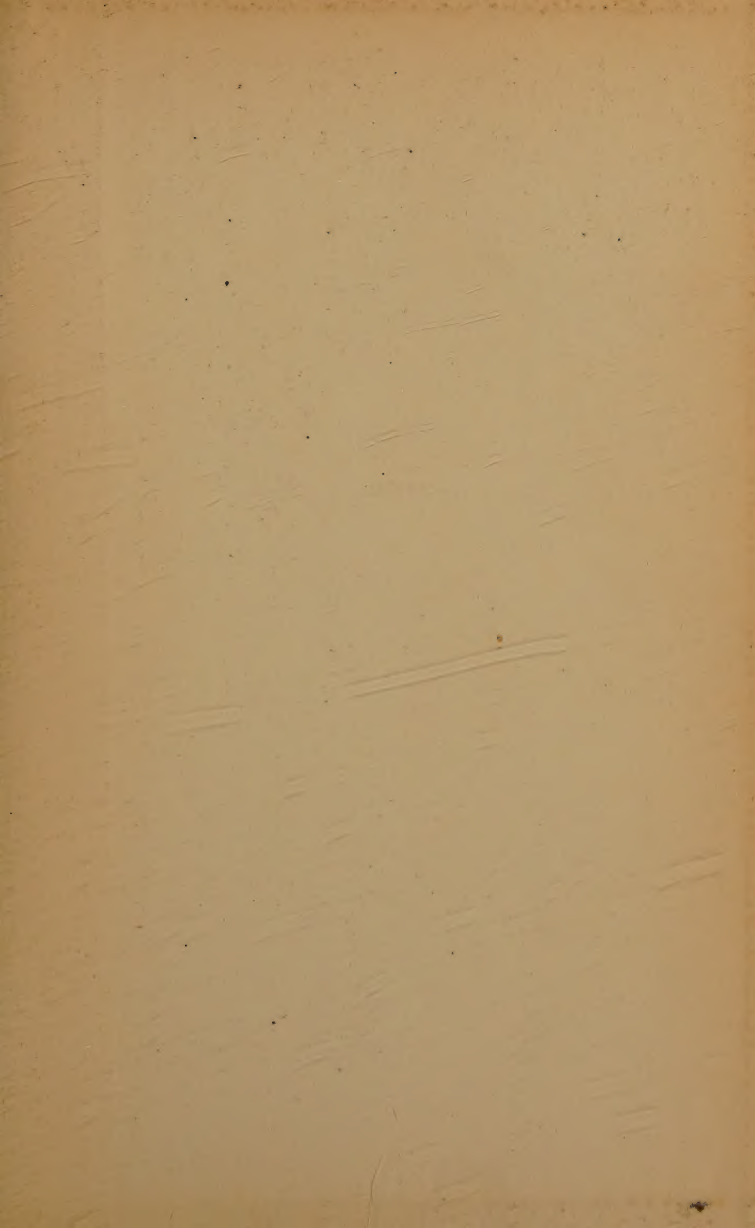
THE SECRET OF SUZANNE

THE JEWELS OF THE MADONNA

Intermezzo

Rafael's Serenade







Y0-ACE-369

